



AS-002360

CSL

③

Diversions of an Indian Political



CSL

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

SPORT AND LIFE IN THE FURTHER HIMALAYA.

BY MOUNTAIN, LAKE, AND PLAIN.

Being Sketches of Sport in Eastern Persia.



“EAST IS EAST.” STROLLING SORCERERS IN LADAK.



AS-2360

CSL

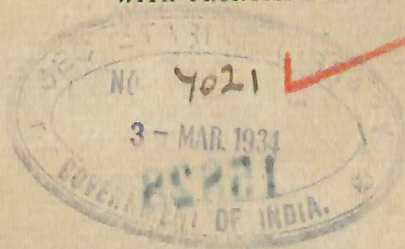
9

Diversions of an Indian Political

BY

LIEUT.-COLONEL R. L. KENNION
C.I.E.

WITH FRONTISPIECE



William Blackwood & Sons Ltd.
Edinburgh and London

1932



CSL

-54

915 4048

KEM-D

915.4

Kem-D

915-4

K42D

15828



CSL⁷⁶

TO
OUR GRANDSON
ALLEN



P R E F A C E.

"SILENCE is posterity's one reply to Anglo-Indian reminiscences!" If the gifted author responsible for the epigram had thought further, he would perhaps have omitted the word 'Anglo-Indian,' for judging by the way things are moving, posterity will be far too busy to read reminiscences about anything. As to the implied lack of interest in things Indian, it seems likely that during the years before us the affairs of that continent will occupy the thoughts of English people—no doubt against their will—in a way they have not done before, at any rate since the Mutiny. For the halcyon days that began with the Queen's proclamation ended—if an approximate date may be given—when Mr Montague became Secretary of State for India. And ahead lies troubled water. The connection between our country and India is, however, far too deep-rooted for the partnership to be dissolved. Happen what may, India will still need the services of Englishmen of the right stamp, as in the past, and will surely obtain them.

These sketches, with one exception, do not touch on such grave issues, and the real excuse for writing them is that next to the interest of doing things comes that of recalling them. As Aloysius Horn says, "One who revives pleasant experiences and puts them on record increases the value of them to himself." If the pleasure is selfish, it can at any rate

PREFACE

harm nobody. There is in fact only one person who in common decency will have to read the book, and that is the small boy to whom it is dedicated. I hope when he does so some years hence, he will not yawn too loudly.

As the sketches have mostly been served up before in another form, my first thought was that a suitable title for the book would be 'Âsh,' which in Persian and Urdu signifies 'hash' (perhaps the same word?)—an 'all-blaze' stew. But as this might have aroused a suspicion of cookery, of which the sketches are innocent, this title had to be rejected in favour of something less suggestive.

My thanks are due firstly to my kind publishers, Messrs Blackwood. Also to the following journals and periodicals by whose courtesy they are published in their present form: the 'Blue Peter,' 'Field,' 'Fighting Forces,' 'Game and Gun,' 'Hesperia,' 'Indian Pioneer,' 'Maga,' 'Nineteenth Century,' 'Scottish Field' and the 'Times.'

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
I. INDIAN RULE AND RULERS	I
II. A JACK OF ALL TRADES	21
III. JANDAR, ORDERLY	49
IV. A B.S.O. IN CENTRAL INDIA	63
V. SPORT IN THE HIMALAYA	85
VI. NARNAISHAI—A MEMORY	95
VII. LEH	99
VIII. A COUNTRY POSTMAN	107
IX. SPORT IN PERSIA	125
X. HALLAL OR HARAM?	133
XI. THE GRAVE OF THAT SAILOR	143
XII. PARTIZANSKI	163
XIII. RECOLLECTIONS OF NEPAL	195
XIV. A ROYAL SHOOTING-GROUND	215
XV. SWAMP DEER	231
XVI. A NEPALESE ARMOURY	241
XVII. SEROW	255
XVIII. A LAST DAY ON THE HILL	267
XIX. AN INDIAN WALL-PAPER	279
XX. A SCOTTISH SNIPE JHIL	285
XXI. A GOOD DOG	297
XXII. A DILEMMA	301
XXIII. FIELD SPORTS AND ETHICS	305



Diversions of an Indian Political

I.

INDIAN RULE AND RULERS.

"Think in this battered caravanserai,
Whose doorways are eternal Night and Day,
How Sultan after Sultan, with his pomp,
Abode his hour or two, and went his way."

A TERM often applied to British rule in India is *hakim-i-waqt*, which may be translated 'temporary Government,' the implication being that, like the many Indian kingdoms that have arisen and finally crashed, British domination will sooner or later come to an end. And this, no doubt, is quite true. The politically minded, however, the Mookerjees¹ of India, are impatient for an immediate abdication. As one of them put it, "English learning may be good, English culture may be good, their philosophy may be good, their Government, their law, everything may be good; but each one of these but helps to rivet the fetters of our servitude. Therefore I say to the English, good as these things may be, take them away beyond the seas, far off to your Western home, so that we and our generation may have nothing to do with them—may not be accursed

¹ The 'Mookerjee' taken here as a type is 'Hurree Chander Mookerjee of Bow Bazaar,' of Rudyard Kipling's parable, 'What Happened.'



with the contamination either of your goodness or of your evil.”¹

When such things can be said, it is of some interest to attempt to picture the sort of rulers these people would be likely to have if their dreams were suddenly to be realised.

A stable central Government on democratic lines, attached, like that of Japan, to the civilisation of the West, is a manifest impossibility. It has often been pointed out that there is no such thing as an Indian nation, and that India is rather a continent of many races, tongues and creeds, the coalescence of which has not yet even begun. The first phase would be general chaos, this being not only the lesson of history but indicated by the fact that the least weakening in the authority of the Government is immediately followed by disorders, more or less grave. The bursting of old Indian bottles, neck-full with the new wine of democracy, might, to start with, result in a hideous mess of Bolshevism; but the Marxian creed is opposed to Eastern feeling and tradition, and in any case would no more mean in India the ‘Dictatorship of the Proletariat’—the idea almost makes one laugh—than it does in Russia. It would mean rather the dictatorship of a few strong, astute and evil men. A somewhat similar result would come about if the elemental struggles for supremacy of rival chiefs took the course that was normal before the advent of the British Raj. In either case ‘Arms and the Man’ would once again govern the situation.

I do not overlook the belief that in Vedic times there did exist in India some form of communal rule, but in present-day India such a thing would be as impossible as a return to the rule of the shepherd kings in Egypt. For one thing, Islam has intervened and rent India into two camps, the other being Brahminism, and so long as both re-

¹ From Lord Zetland’s ‘Heart of Aryavarta.’



ligions are alive, peace cannot be. There is no analogy, it should be said, between Turkey and Persia—Asiatic countries that have adopted a so-called democratic Government—and India, for, unlike the heterogeneous elements that make up the population of Hindustan, the former have each one predominant race, professing one religion.

Whatever the Indian intelligentsia may think or say, to the masses 'democratic government' is still a contradiction in terms; and the fact, if it were known to them, that most Western nations have adopted this form of rule would constitute no argument that Babu government in India, reinforced by no 'framework of steel,' would be feasible or even desirable. "The English," we read in that mirror of the Asiatic mind, 'Haji Baba,' "have certain houses full of madmen, who meet for the purpose of quarrelling. If one says 'white,' the other cries 'black,' and they throw more words away in settling a common question than would suffice one of our *muftis* during a whole reign. In short, nothing can be settled in the State, be it only whether a rebellious *agha* is to have his head cut off or some such trifle, till these people have wrangled."

Assuming, then, that foreign Powers would be content to play the part of anguished spectators, as they do now in regard to the chaos in China, India would again come under tyrant rule. It is conceivable that one strong man might eventually succeed in carving out for himself an empire as wide as that of the Moghuls, though even Aurungzeb, at the height of his power, never brought India, as the saying goes, 'under one umbrella.' But this is unlikely, as a simple illustration shows. Everyone acquainted with the Indian Army knows that though a Sikh officer, to take one instance, may command a Sikh company admirably, and might even command a Sikh battalion admirably, if he were placed in command of a mixed regiment of other classes,



however capable and single-minded he might be, there would be mutiny within a week. And the same holds good with all the fighting classes that serve harmoniously together under British officers. In a similar way, following the disappearance of British rule in India, it is certain that the peninsula would again become a cockpit for the rivalry of many chieftains, 'princely adventurers in State-making,' whose respective territories and boundaries would be shaped according to 'the good old rule, the simple plan.'

And what of the existing powerful Indian States? Some of them at any rate would fall into the melting-pot. Most of the ruling dynasties were founded by men who began as captains of guerilla bands, and this might happen again. Other States might arise on the ashes of the old. All that can be said with certainty is that, in the general scramble, the present chiefs would start with a big advantage.

Tyrant rule has its good and its bad features. In the following paragraphs it is proposed to review, naturally in a very cursory way, a few of the characteristics of the men who, in the hypothetical circumstances of an abandoned India—an India, as the expression goes, 'stewing in its own juice'—might be expected to take the place of the Viceroy and the complicated administration of which he is the head. For the purpose of such an inquiry, one's guide must be history; for in spite of the many changes which have taken place in recent years, the racial characteristics of the inhabitants have altered little, if at all. Indeed, under the caste and marriage systems that control the lives of most Indians, evolution must be a very slow process. In the East, moreover, minds tend to be retrospective. Hindus still dream of the heroic age of the Mahabarat. Mohammedans' eyes are still dazzled by the glories of the Imperial courts of the Middle Ages.

In outlining a composite picture of a typical

INDIAN RULE AND RULERS

Eastern ruler, the quality that stands out most prominently is strength. The Orient worships at the shrine of force. The late Sir George Roos-Keppel used to tell how one day he saw an old Khyber Pass Afridi leaning on his long *jezail* by the side of the new military road, to watch our troops go by—infantry, cavalry and guns, the might of the Sirkar. And as he looked and wondered, involuntarily he salaamed and salaamed, as he muttered, "*Zor! zor!*" ("Strength! strength!") He was bowing before the greatest manifestation of strength he had ever seen. But the cult is not confined to the militant creed of Islam. The very ancient code of Manu said, "What the king has not got, let him strive to gain by military force." The Hindu pantheon includes several personifications of the idea of strength. Even the mild Buddhist has been driven to adopt the hideous man-devouring Vajra Bhairava as a metamorphosis of the gentle and merciful Avalokita. So it follows that the greatest Eastern rulers have been soldiers rather than administrators.

There is a Persian couplet—

"In the depth of the sea are incalculable riches,
 But safety lieth upon the shore."

The typical king, like the pearl diver, plunged for 'the incalculable riches'; he was a gambler in kingdoms. It was in a way an instinct of self-preservation, as nature seems to abhor a static condition in States (as much as a vacuum), so that a ruler was almost compelled to devour or be devoured. And he was never satisfied—

"If a King obtains possession of the seven climes (*i.e.*, the whole world),
 He still dreams of conquering another clime."

So the old struggles would be renewed. Punjabis, Sikhs, Mahrattas and half a dozen other martial

DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN POLITICAL

races under their respective chiefs would rend one another like wolves over a carcass, while the non-martial majority would suffer patiently, as always. As for the fighting races beyond the frontier—Afghans, Pathans, Gurkhas—one can hardly picture their being left out in the cold.¹

Though the typical Eastern king was a lion in attack, generally leading his troops in person, he had the cunning usually attributed to another animal, and in moments of defeat he was not, like Hannibal, the last to quit the field. Personal health and strength were essential, so that even to hint at the king's indisposition was a breach of court etiquette. By a curious euphemism, it was customary to speak not of 'the illness of the king,' but of the 'illness of the king's enemy.' History tells of many of these rulers' feats of endurance. Agha Mohammed, the eunuch monarch of Persia,² when he fled from Shiraz, reached Ispahan on the third day, a distance of two hundred and fifty miles. In the 'Memoirs of the Emperor Baber' we read, "To-day I swam the Ganges for a diversion. I had previously swam every river that I had met

¹ The following extract from the 'Times' graphically describes the situation in China: "Civil war involving half a million of men is actually in progress, another half-million are waiting to jump into the fray. . . . As to the cause of the fighting, everybody in the country knows that it is military rivalry, nothing more and nothing less. . . . The administration has been destroyed in all its branches, and there is no security for the inhabitants, for lives, or property. . . . Brigands harry the land to an extent never known in history. Opium has again become the national scourge, legalised and encouraged almost everywhere. . . . Famine stalks in several provinces. There is misery everywhere, due to the terror of bandits, the ruthless tyranny of the soldiers, the exactions of the officials and the absence of legal protection. . . . It is impossible to overpaint the situation in China to-day resulting from the rise of militarism and the disappearance of regulated authority."

For 'China' substitute 'India,' and you have a picture of the situation if Indian extremists had their way.

² From the most remote times India has been subject to irruptions of races from the North and North-West, with the result that her rulers, many of whom were themselves invaders, have had characteristics common to rulers in Persia and the East generally.



INDIAN RULE AND RULERS

except the Ganges." His refusal of the shelter of a cave, to share with his soldiers a bivouac in the snow, finds a place in children's story-books. Akbar the Great rode 220 miles in forty-eight hours. A still more notable performance was his march with 3000 men, in which 450 miles were covered in nine days, during the Indian monsoon. Sivaji's exploits are probably unsurpassed for daring in the annals of any people. The same virility was shown in these rulers' passion for hunting. Jehangir, according to his own memoirs, killed 17,168 animals and birds himself—with different weapons to ours! No doubt the Moghuls' sporting tastes were inherited from their Tartar ancestors, whose vast game drives in Mongolia were the biggest things of the kind recorded in history.

A feature that distinguishes tyrant rule from other forms of government is indicated in the words, *l'état c'est moi*. Eastern kings, in order to preserve the State and themselves, had to be ruthless. A similar tendency may still be observed wherever power is in the hands of Dictators: in Italy, Afghanistan, Russia, differing in degree according to the difficulties of the situation. In Mookerjee's India there would be many difficulties, and the rulers would assuredly follow precedent and be very ruthless. "Cruelties may be used well or badly," wrote the oriental-minded Machiavelli. "Well used may be called those which are committed for the sake of securing oneself, and which afterwards are not persisted in. . . . Cruelties ill used are those which, although few at first, increase rather than diminish with time."¹

¹ Compare with this a speech of Signor Mussolini's as reported in the 'Times.' "Violence is moral when it is timely, chiralurgical and chivalrous. . . . Violence must be reserved exclusively as the instrument and for the needs of the State. The party must confine itself to creating and maintaining a sympathetic attitude for this eventual State violence. The private, individual, uncontrollable violence is anti-Fascist."

DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN POLITICAL

In Indian history one reads page after page full of inhuman cruelties till the imagination is numbed. These were for the most part political and, according to the Machiavellian view, justifiable. Of such a kind were the massacres, the 'gardens' of men planted head downwards, the heaps of wrenched-out eyes, the towers with human heads in place of stones (*aere perennius*), the prisoners of war skinned alive, impaled.

It has been said that in lawless countries butcheries are in the end the most effective and humane means of pacification, and that the fear inspired by savage rulers leads to a degree of quiet that milder rulers may sigh for in vain. Perhaps it is a case of *solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant*. The fact is, that before the British domination the Indian people were hopelessly involved in a vicious circle, an inefficient Government, lawlessness, frightfulness.¹

The common practice of rulers killing or mutilating all possible rivals—the tall poppies—was similarly a political kind of cruelty. In particular, brothers were suspect and had to be put out of the way. "Ten dervishes," the proverb ran, "may sit on one carpet, but two kings may not exist in one country." Frightfulness induces a habit of mind, and it is not surprising that Eastern despots, with very few exceptions, were wantonly cruel, even such model rulers as Karim Khan of Persia and Akbar the Great. The former put out the eyes of his most faithful General on the mere suspicion of disloyalty. The Moghul Emperor once found a lamplighter

¹ By 'frightfulness' is generally meant punishments disproportionate to the crime committed, with the object of terrorising others. It must be admitted that the record of British rule has not been altogether free from instances of this kind, few and far between, and in severity not to be compared with what India had previously been accustomed to. Whatever may have been the immediate cause of such incidents (which are manifestly alien to the spirit of British rule), they can, I think, always be traced back to some mistake of policy on the part of our Government, leading to anarchical situations which local officers have had to deal with as best they could.



asleep in some part of the palace where he should not have been. The quickest way out was over the parapet, and that was the way the unfortunate lighter of lamps went. As an instance of this wanton sort of cruelty there was the case of a blind man who, during the forcible evacuation of the inhabitants of Delhi to Daulatabad, remained behind. He was dragged by a rope for forty days. One leg eventually arrived. The heroic Baber had an officer skinned alive who did not display a proper spirit of bravery. It should not be supposed that the East has outgrown barbarism of this kind. In quite recent times, the late ruler of Afghanistan, in many respects an exemplary Eastern king, so far maintained the traditional character as to elicit protests from the Government of India; and it may be taken that disagreeable things were not said to the Amir without very good reason. The horrible method of execution in Kabul known as the Black Pit, an oubliette into which the condemned were dropped alive to die amid the remains of their predecessors, was certainly employed till very recently. Oriental imagery here comes to my aid: "To dive to the depths of the sea with a crocodile or to suck drops of poison from the lips of a snake whose tail has been cut off is more akin to safety than waiting upon Kings!"¹

In the India that Mookerjee would resuscitate, the administration of justice would revert to an earlier type, not wholly bad. Indeed, assuming the desire to do justice, rough and ready methods are perhaps more suited to the needs of the Indian peasantry, say 90 per cent of the population, than the present cumbrous procedure. But, speaking generally, the scales of justice were not held by

¹ It may be said that horrors and cruelties have also been recorded in European history. It is, of course, the difference between an evil that is general and one that is exceptional. Europe has not professed the religion of Christ during some 1500 years for nothing.

DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN POLITICAL

Indian despots and their officers with the impartiality that has always characterised the British judiciary in India, an impartiality so much appreciated that Indians prefer to bring their cases before an inexperienced Sahib rather than before a magistrate of their own colour.

Under tyrant rule in India, punishments were firstly deterrent and secondly vindictive, or shall we say retributive? Very little was heard of the reform of offenders, juvenile or otherwise. A baker who gave short weight would perhaps be thrust into his own oven; a profiteer in foodstuffs would be tied to a stake in his own granary to perish of hunger. The art of making the punishment fit the crime is peculiarly Eastern. The skeleton in an iron cage high above the city wall was once a man who falsely advertised the approach of hostile troops. He was slung aloft till they should appear in sight. From all which it is clear that 'painful but humorous' was not the invention of comic opera.

Humour, it may be conceded, occasionally intervened on the side of mercy, in illustration of which I may be permitted to recall the story of a Sultan and a dissolute priest. At dawn the police burst in on the scene of his night's debauch and found him asleep. "Awake," they cried, "awake, the sun is risen!" He sat up. "Did it rise in the East or in the West?" "In the East," they said. "Then God be praised, for it is written, 'So long as the sun rises in the East there is forgiveness.'" He was haled before the Sultan, who ordered that he should be cast down from a high tower, "that others might take warning." The priest represented that he had but one petition to make. "What is that?" said the Sultan. "Cast someone else down," he begged, "that *I* may take warning." The Sultan smiled, and the priest had saved his skin.

It may be said in passing that though a Sultan might smile, his dignity did not permit him to laugh,



or at least not to the extent of 'showing the teeth.' To Nadir Shah it was once suggested by a brave courtier that he might laugh when alone. "What!" he exclaimed, "is not Nadir Shah himself present?"

Oriental poets and writers, who performed the functions of the press of these days, in giving voice—with some discretion—to public opinion, always bestowed extraordinary appreciation on the monarchs who exhibited, even to a moderate extent, the qualities of justice and mercy. In the long roll of kings, Naushirwan has come down to posterity as 'the Just.' He astonished the Roman Ambassador by tolerating an old woman's hut in view of the palace. His refusal to commandeer salt from a village near which he was hunting became the theme of poetry, and the truth of the observation he is credited with on this occasion has not been diminished by the lapse of time, and will appeal to everyone who has lived in the East:—

"If a King but eat an apple from a subject's garden,
His slaves will pull up the tree from its roots.
For the half egg which the Sultan deems it right to take by
force,
His followers put a thousand fowls on the spit."

Naushirwan the Just, however, murdered two of his brothers, and caused untold misery by deporting the population of Antioch to the Tigris.

Generosity—often, it must be said, at the expense of others—was a fashionable virtue with the old kings. That the recipients favoured frequently belonged to the profession of arms was perhaps natural—"cherish the Army as your life, for the Sultan rules by the Army." Among the little Khanates of the Hindu Kush, which to-day present many points of interest as microcosms of vanished Eastern courts, this kind of generosity is still in evidence. The chiefs make, for their means, handsome presents to favoured persons, but to provide

DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN POLITICAL

them the simple expedient is adopted of taking them from others who for the moment are under a cloud—a horse from one, a rifle from another, a girl from a third. The merit of this generosity must be further discounted by the custom that gifts of greater value are generally expected in return, thus affording a means of squeezing persons of rank. It is clear from the praise bestowed on one of the less exacting of the old monarchs that the gifts presented by subjects were examined with a critical eye. "If he received presents, he appeared as well pleased as those who proffered them, or rather as those who received presents from him. There was not anything, however trifling," the writer added with naïve approval, "brought him by way of a present that he did not receive kindly."

Charity to the poor not only figured in court ceremonial, but constituted, as it still does, one of the most kindly characteristics of the East amongst all classes.

The value of display in India has been so far recognised by our own practical Government that carefully rehearsed flashes of glory are vouchsafed to the populace on suitable occasions. But in the old days, pomp and pageantry was an affair of every day. "The Moghul Emperor," wrote Sir Thomas Roe, "came down the steps with such an acclamation of 'Health to the King' as would have out-roared cannon. Then one of his servants came and girt on the King's sword, and hung on his buckler, set all over with diamonds and rubies, the belts being of gold, suitable. On his head he wore a rich turban with a plume of heron's feathers, not many, but long. On one side of his turban hung a ruby unset, as big as a walnut; on the other, a diamond as large."

Speech to the monarch was in conventional metaphor:—

"If in the daytime the King should remark it is night,
You should reply, 'Behold the moon and Pleiades!'"



Plain speaking was, to say the least, inexpedient. A Persian courtier in 'Haji Baba' thus expressed his disgust with the speech of the English Ambassador: "Characteristic of the people he represented—that is, unadorned, unpolished. Neither more nor less than the truth; such as a camel-driver might use to a muleteer; and had it not been for the ingenuity of our interpreter, our Shah would neither have been addressed by the title of 'King of Kings,' or 'Kibleh of the Universe!'"¹

But the glitter of Oriental courts, save for a fitful flicker in some of the Indian States, has disappeared; the elephants covered with gold and jewels, the beast fights, the mail-clad horsemen, the slaves, the eunuchs, the seraglios. The thunder of kettle-drums will never again resound from Imperial Naqara Khanas. Whatever happens, rulers of India will no more sit in silver scales to be weighed against gold, nor have bowls of jewels poured over their heads. If not less brutal than their forerunners, they will certainly be less picturesque.

Though some of the successful Mohammedan rulers were zealots in the cause of their faith, like soldiers generally, they were not, as a rule, intolerant people. Naturally, in an intensely religious country, they had to maintain appearances, but in this they followed rather than set an example. Free-thinking Akbar was a greater man than cruel, crafty, pious Aurungzeb, but his niche in the temple of fame is a less exalted one. There is a story of a Hindu prince who dared to defy public opinion. Disappointed in the results of his prayers, after abusing his gods and accusing them of having obtained from him enormous quantities of goats and sweetmeats on false pretences, he ended by ordering his artillery

¹ Indian extremists are fond of inveighing against the 'slave mentality' of their countrymen, which they attribute, along with famine, plague and other evils, to British rule—a curious inversion of fact! It is, of course, the case that the revolt *against* the servile attitude of mind is *entirely* due to Western education and example.

into action against them. "Many of the chiefs and soldiers ran away panic-stricken, and others hesitated to obey, and not until several gunners had been cut down were the guns opened. Down came the gods and goddesses from their sacred positions, and after six hours' heavy cannonading not a vestige of the deities remained." It is unnecessary to add that this prince's reign did not last very long.

Whether religious or no—and it is probably correct to say that morality, as we understand it, is not directly inculcated by the religions of India—nearly all Eastern potentates were voluptuaries by upbringing. It has been said that it is less injurious to the commonwealth that a king should fancy his neighbour's wife than cast an eye on his neighbour's possessions. Readers of Indian history (not to speak of our own!) will know that the suggested alternatives are not mutually exclusive. They may do both. The susceptibility of 'martial men' to the allurements of love was attributed by Bacon to a law of compensation—the payment of pains by pleasures. In this respect, Mohammedan potentates had the advantage of a religion that allows very considerable liberty, though whether, in the absence of religious sanction, they would have behaved differently, is at least open to doubt. In the matter of drink, the Prophet anticipated prohibition laws by many centuries, yet we read of Mohammedan Sultans and kings drinking themselves to sleep with as much regularity as their Hindu rivals. Not without qualms, perhaps. The aspiration '*to-morrow* we'll be sober' echoes down the centuries. "As I intended," the Emperor Babar wrote, "to abstain from wine at the age of forty, and as I wanted something less than a year of that age, I drank wine most copiously" ¹

¹ From the 'Memoirs of Baber,' by Lieut.-Colonel F. G. Talbot. Baber did not actually fulfil his vow till five years later, when, on the eve of the greatest battle of his life, after smashing up his cups



The arts of poetry, painting and architecture were almost always patronised by typical Eastern rulers. Many of them, indeed, had pretensions to being artists themselves. As for those who had none, poetry and architecture were necessary to their fame with present, and to the perpetuation of their name with future generations, the latter a very powerful motive; while the artists themselves, in the absence of an artistic public, were driven to be the hangers-on of courts.

The relations between kings and poets was somewhat maliciously portrayed in a story told by Malcolm, the historian of Persia :—

“ A poet had composed a panegyric upon the Monarch’s wisdom, valour and virtues. As he was taking it to the Palace he met a friend at the outer gate, who enquired where he was going. He told him his purpose. His friend asked if he was insane to offer an ode to a barbarian who hardly understood a word of Persian. ‘ All that you say may be true,’ said he, ‘ but I am starving, and have no means of livelihood but making verses. So I must proceed.’ He went and stood before the Governor with the ode in his hand. ‘ Who is that fellow ? ’ exclaimed the Afghan, ‘ and what is the paper that he holds ? ’ ‘ I am a poet,’ replied the man, ‘ and the paper contains some poetry.’ ‘ What is the use of poetry ? ’ said the Chief. ‘ To render great men like you immortal,’ he replied, making a very profound bow. ‘ Let us hear some of it.’ The poet began to read his composition aloud, but he had not finished the second stanza before he was interrupted. ‘ Enough ! ’ exclaimed the Governor. ‘ I understand it all. Give the poor man some money—that is what he wants.’ The poet received his present, and retired quite delighted. He met his friend at the door, who accosted him again. ‘ You are now, no doubt,

and utensils and pouring out the wine on the ground, he adjured his officers to become *ghazis* to the faith in the speech in which occur those words : “ He who sits down to the feast of life must end by drinking the cup of death—”

The writer has known a chief of the North-West Frontier similarly end his drinking habits.

DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN POLITICAL

convinced of the folly of carrying odes to a man who does not understand a word of them.' 'Not understand?' he replied. 'You are quite mistaken. He has, beyond all men I have ever met, the quickest apprehension of a poet's meaning!'"

When not engaged in attacking someone else or in defending himself, the Oriental despot had leisure to turn to administrative matters. He belonged to the *laissez faire* school. The preservation of order, the administration of justice and the collection of revenue constituted the simple functions of his Government. The two first have already been touched upon. The British revenue system was, of course, based on that elaborated by the Moghuls, the chief difference between the two being that the latter was administered as laxly as the former is efficiently. It is alleged by the discontented minority in India that this very efficiency has resulted in the peasantry being really worse off now than they were under the Moghuls. The falsity of this view has often been exposed, but is too complicated a matter to enter into here. The revenue system that was actually in force before the advent of the British has been concisely described as 'extortion tempered by bribery.'

The 'depressed classes'? The architectural masterpieces scattered over the length and breadth of India bearing the names of kings and queens and courtesans are in fact monuments over the graves of countless victims of the *corvée*. And their lot was perhaps not the worst. In the days of our Queen Elizabeth, William Finch wrote as follows: "The King's manner of hunting is this. He causeth with choice men a certaine wood or desert place to be incircled. . . . And whatsoever is taken in this inclosure is called the King's sikar or game, whether men or beasts, and whosoever lets ought escape without the King's mercy must lose his life. The



beasts taken if man's meat are sold and the money given to the poore : if men they remain the King's slaves, which he yearely sends to Cabull to barter for horses and dogs ; these being poore, miserable, thievish people that live in woods and deserts, little differing from beasts."

As to education, the "imperativeness of teaching all children to write and to spell and to parse, and to know where Timbuctoo lies," was not apparent to the old despots. It may also be said with confidence that if the 'pathetic contentment' of the Indian masses, which some of our politicians have found so regrettable, had then existed, the rulers of that time would not have gone out of their way in an effort to destroy it. It is probable, indeed, if the idea had been mooted, that they would have very strenuously denied that there could be any advantage in attempting to cultivate the brains of millions of people who, in the nature of things, must remain toilers with their hands all their lives. Education is, however, one of those matters which the rulers of Mookerjee's India, like the present Tuchuns of China, will probably be too busy to think about.

Enough has perhaps been said to show that when Indians have been freed from the 'contamination of our goodness and of our evil,' they may regain experience of a type of ruler quite different to the men England has sent out to govern her dependency. A statue to one of the earlier Governors-General, bearing a very noble inscription, was erected in 1835 by Englishmen *and* Indians :—

"To William Cavendish Bentinck, who, during seven years, ruled India with eminent prudence, integrity, and benevolence ; who, placed at the head of a great empire, never laid aside the simplicity and moderation of a private citizen ; who infused into Oriental despotism the spirit of British freedom ; who never forgot that the end of government is the welfare of the governed ; who abolished cruelties ; who effaced humiliating distinctions ; who allowed the ex-

pression of public opinion ; whose constant study it was to elevate the moral and intellectual character of the Government committed to his charge. This monument was erected by men who, differing from each other in race, in manners, in language, and in religion, cherish with equal veneration and gratitude the memory of his wise, upright, and paternal administration."

But at that time men were living whose fathers might have seen certain things. They might, for instance, have been at Delhi, the Imperial City, when Nadir Shah gave the word for a general massacre, following which, amid scenes of rapine, lust and carnage, there fell 8000 victims. They might have seen similar happenings a few years later, when the 'Abdalee' swept through Northern India, or possibly been present on the occasion when there were slain in the holy city of Murtra a vast number of harmless devotees. If not inured to horrors, they would have been horrified when Ghulam Kadir's soldiers were loosed on Delhi, where, for two months, such scenes of violence and barbarity were witnessed as were probably without precedent in the world's annals. The subscribers to the monument *themselves* would have been alive when "aggression and rapine was the only principle of action among Indian princes, and wars were commenced and prosecuted without any semblance of justice, and restrained only by power of resistance." Born to a heritage of oppression and misgovernment, they would have been acquainted with terror in many shapes : the terror of wars and the even more desolating incursions of the Mahrattas and Pindaris ; the terror of lonely roads beset by the murderous fraternity of the Thugs ; the terror of impending famine with no possibility of succour ; *sati*, a fate darkening the life of every Hindu woman of gentle birth.

The present generation of Indians have forgotten these things. The ordered peace in which they have lived has acted as a dope, so that they do not realise



that in this twentieth century horrors may and do occur as in the times of which we have been speaking not so very long ago. There have doubtless been changes in India in recent years. One may picture a Nadir Shah of the future dressed in *khaki* instead of *khimkab*, his army equipped with machine-guns instead of *talwars* and *burchas*, with tanks and aeroplanes instead of elephants and hordes of cavalry. With the example of the Turks before us, one may even imagine an Indian dictator of the future decreeing the billycock as a national head-dress. But human nature does not change so quickly. There are few with experience of the Asiatic, sophisticated or unsophisticated, who would deny that *East is East* still.¹

And what of Mookerjee himself? What of the politically minded, the facile orators of the Indian cities, with their Western catchwords? How would they fare under Home Rule? The question was asked by Rudyard Kipling years ago :—

“ What became of Mookerjee, soothly who can say ?
Yar Mohammed only grins in a nasty way.
Jowar Singh is reticent, Chambu Singh is mute,
But the belts of all of them simply bulge with loot.

What became of Mookerjee, ask Mohammed Yar,
Prodding Siva's sacred bull down the Bow Bazaar.
Speak to placid Nubbee Buksh, question land and sea ;
Ask the Indian congress man, only don't ask me ! ”

¹ The writer would guard himself against the charge of being a 'reactionary.' He believes in the increasing participation of Indians in the Government of the country. But Home Rule—even as a distant goal? Not till changes have taken place in India of which at present there are no signs.

POSTSCRIPT.

The six years that have elapsed since the above was written have seen some astonishing developments in the Indian situation. Hasty and ill-considered but irrevocable steps have been taken. Whither they are tending no human being can say. The following quotations from writers possessing both intellect and knowledge are at least suggestive:—

The late Lord Birkenhead ('Turning Points in History'): "It will be observed that rulership over a large portion of Indian territory has been invariably due to the force of character with which one man or another has imposed his will upon millions of the native population."

Al Carthill ('Rods and Axes'): "As for the (British) electorate, an unpopular dog tax would be far more hurtful to a Ministry in the constituencies than the covert surrender of trans-oceanic empires."

Sir Arnold Wilson ('The next Twenty Years in Asia.' A paper read before the Royal Central Asian Society): "The ancient feudal system will (in twenty years) revive, as it has revived in the North-West Frontier province, to the discomfiture of 'the younger members of the intelligentsia.' Its revival will be accompanied, as I have suggested elsewhere, by the growth, as noticeable of recent years in every other Eastern State, of personal rule, by strong men, the product of hard times. The third election will, in most parts of India, be the last; the system, which Lord Lothian has himself condemned in a few well-chosen words, will be swept away by popular resentment. Men will look, not in vain, for the Word of Power—compared with which the babblings of Legislative Assemblies are as 'the small dust of the balance' of the Book of Isaiah. They will look for it, I fear, in vain from the representatives of Great Britain, but each place will hear it in their own tongue; taught by the proverbial wisdom of the ages, by the terrors of internecine strife and the miseries of acute scarcity, they will follow the leaders of the hour. Another Akbar of Sivaji may arise, or both, or even an Alexander from beyond the frontiers of India."



II.

A JACK OF ALL TRADES.

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE INDIAN POLITICAL SERVICE.

It may be hoped that before long someone with the necessary knowledge and flair will write a history of the Indian Foreign and Political Department. Across its pages would pass many great figures: Burns, Pottinger, Elphinstone, Stoddart, Malcolm, Outram, Edwardes—names that recall some of the most romantic episodes in British Indian annals. Of more recent times it would tell of Warburton and Deane of the North-West Frontier, Young-husband of Tibet, Bailey of the North-East Frontier, Macartney of Kashgar, and lastly there would be the famous Politicals of the war and post-war periods: Cox, Wilson and Leachman of Iraq, Humphreys of Kabul; and these are but a few names taken almost at random.

This sketch does not deal with such men, nor with high politics, but aims rather at depicting very cursorily a few of the casual jobs normally carried out by the rank and file of the Department. And if I confine myself to reminiscences of a personal kind, many of them very trivial, it is not because they have been exceptional, nor on the other hand because they have been ordinary, but for the reason that to my loss and gain I happen to have been one of the Department's rolling-stones. The fact is that every Political billet in India is *sui generis*,

and every officer of the Department is supposed to be capable of dealing with 'any old' situation as it comes along, a faculty which seems to have been imbibed with their mother's milk by Englishmen generally.

As to training, up to the present there have been what may be called two sub-species of Political, recruited respectively from the Indian Civil Service and the Indian Army. The civilian element—speaking generally—were men selected for their possession of certain blunt, sporting, so-called 'soldierly' qualities, while the Military Politicals were men of the fighting service credited with some fraction of the brains of their civilian brethren. As for bookish qualifications, all that was necessary—I am speaking of pre-war days—was some knowledge of Indian history, of a couple or more of the Indian vernaculars, of International Law, of the Treaties with the Indian Princes and of the Indian codes. Finally, the candidate had to survive a period of probation.

Thus prepared, a Political had amongst other things to be ready to undertake various duties in what may be called the domestic line, from parson to judge. To read the church services, for example; to start infant subjects of His Majesty in life—not, I hasten to explain, by baptism, but by registration. To marry people. Once my wife coming out to join me in Mohammerah had under her wing a young lady engaged to a man in the A.P.O.C. The voyage was rough, and my wife was concerned to see her charge becoming paler and paler till finally, as the steward remarked, she lay in her cabin "like an alabaster log." However, when she stepped on shore she was looking beautiful, and an hour later she was Mrs ——. I have read, I am sorry to say, many funeral services, as coroner have held an inquest on a British suicide, and as temporary Sessions Judge have had to pronounce sentences of



death. The cases that came before me were of the inverted type of *crimes passionnels* common among Pathans, and, I am glad to remember, they aroused in my mind no misgivings about the rightness of capital punishment.

My initiation to political work (as the word is understood in India) was one cold weather many years ago—'92, to be precise—when my regiment, the Central India Horse, marched from Goonna to a camp of exercise and I remained to officiate for the commandant, who at that time held political charge over part of the Gwalior State, then under a minority. Beyond some odd bits of shikar, the only incident that memory has preserved was the capture and trial of a gang of Bhil dacoits. It struck me as strange—perhaps a useful lesson—that men who had tied rags soaked in paraffin round women's fingers and set them alight to extort the disclosure of hidden hoards, showed in their faces no signs of unusual cruelty, in fact they differed little in appearance from those who gave evidence against them. A spell of 'boundary settlement' work—that is, of demarcating disputed boundaries between some of the States in Central India and Rajputana—followed, a delightful time in a country haunted by the ghosts of old-time romance, made the more pleasant by the kindly interest of the Political Agent at Bhopawar under whom I worked. De Laessoe was a Dane by birth. He had distinguished himself under Sir Peter Lumsden in the Russo-Afghan boundary negotiations over the Panjdeh oasis, and had afterwards been brought on to the cadre of the Political Department. Trusted by everyone that knew him, savant, mystic and spiritualist, his latter years involved a tragedy which cannot be related here.

My period of probation over, I was sent to Kashmir as 2nd Assistant to the Resident, then Sir Hugh Barnes. There are, of course, two Kashmirs. One

is the Kashmir of the Moghul Emperors and Lala Rukh, a country of blue lakes and distant snow-capped mountains, of chenar trees and gardens 'ancient as the hills,' now become, with its crowds of visitors and its polo and golf and parties, almost like an Indian hill station. The other is the Kashmir of the sportsman, a wilderness of mountains that stretches to the frontiers of China and Afghanistan. It is with the first of these that '2 A' was concerned. He was a kind of spring-buffer interposed between the subjects of the State—tradesmen, *shikaris*, boatmen, cooks and so on on the one side and British visitors on the other. His office shelves sagged with bulky files full of letters from distressed mem-sahibs—some of them on subjects of considerable intimacy. I recollect taking one of these files to the Resident to get his orders on an intricate case and with wonder watching him turn the papers over with amazing facility—the sort of wonder with which a tyro might watch an experienced bridge player handle a pack of cards. In an incredibly short time he had acquainted himself with the salient points of the case and had handed the file back to me. "You will often find it best," he said with a suspicion of a smile, "in difficult situations *to do nothing at all*. If left alone, there are very few cases which will not settle themselves!" "But, sir"—his table bell rang and I was dismissed. The 2nd Assistant had indeed need of some of these minor arts of diplomacy. Among other matters it fell to me to arrange the seating of a large and daily fluctuating number of British *invités*—practically everyone in Kashmir—to the annual State banquet, a task in which deference to the official list of precedence had somehow to be reconciled with the benevolence of a providence that watches over the affairs not only of young men and maidens but of those old enough to know better. The Maharaja, a high-caste Dogra, did not eat with his guests,



but took a seat at the head of the table in time to hear his health proposed by the Resident in a long speech, in which the affairs of the State were touched on. When the latter sat down, the eyes of all were turned towards the Maharaja, who presently looked over his shoulder and hoarsely ejaculated the one word—*bolo* ("Speak!"). His secretary, standing behind him, then spoke. It was as if a Royal Personage had pressed a button to open the flood-gates of a canal. Perhaps it was as well H.H. did not speak himself, as he could hardly have resisted the opportunity of saying something very *malin*. As, for instance, when at a big garden party he took a bit of a Great Lady's dress between his finger and thumb with the observation—in no confidential undertone—"Not all silk I think!" If he had himself spoken at the banquet, he might have made just that remark about the Resident's speech!

An engineer once came up from India to report on the water supply of Srinagar. Having made his inspection, he was given an audience by the Maharaja. It happened that he had not with him the frock-coat of ceremony—it was in those far-off days—and he presented himself in a decent suit of tweeds. Two chairs were placed in an upper room overlooking the city—a big gilt one for the ruler, a lesser one for his visitor. The engineer, bursting with enthusiasm, poured out his story of all he had seen, his conclusions and recommendations. Then he paused, expecting some comment from the Maharaja, perhaps some words of approval. There was a silence. Then the Maharaja turned his impassive face, his tired eyes, towards the young man, and in his slow drawl said, "*Ap ke pas frark kot nahin hai?*" ("Is your honour without a frock-coat?") The interview was concluded. In spite of certain peculiarities, mostly harmless, Sir Partab was a good sportsman, and by Indian standards a good

DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN POLITICAL

ruler. And so is his nephew, the present Maharaja. Yet while the Indian agitator with one breath vociferously demands that India should be handed over to native rule, with the next he urges the intervention of the Government in the affairs and administration of an Indian State because it falls short of British standards!

While I was the Resident's Assistant some stir was caused by the arrival in Kashmir of a young British officer who, accused of some military offences, had broken his arrest and fled. He was reputed to be mad. Passing through Srinagar, where he had stopped a few days, he had hid himself among the mountains to the north. It would have been impossible to send a military party to arrest him in an Indian State without a 'by your leave' and probably much correspondence, and there were reasons also against applying for his arrest and extradition by State officials. So the Military Department moved the Foreign Department, who requested the Resident, who told me to catch the fellow. Two officers and a small party from a British regiment without arms and in plain clothes were at the same time sent to take over the prisoner when caught and bring him to India. We departed into the wilds, and eventually our quarry was located among the mountains overlooking the Sind valley. According to my information he had pitched a tent at the top of a high hill. A *shikari* was with him, and now and again he would wander forth after bears. His rifle never left his hand, and he had announced his intention of shooting anyone who tried to take him. The weak spot in his defence was, of course, the Kashmiri *shikari*.

A little winding goatherd's track ran down a steep bare spur. A single big deodar stood near the path and I behind the deodar. The escort were in a hollow fifty yards lower down. The hour fixed

was past, and I grew anxious about the success of my plan. Then from high up a Kashmiri appeared striding down the path, and some twenty yards behind him a Sahib with his rifle slung. As the *shikari* passed me he gave a wink, and next moment I had my arms round my man and we were rolling down the hill to an accompaniment of terrific yells. The rest was simple. During our return journey poor X. was expecting a rescue by Russian cossacks. He *was* mad. On reaching comparative civilisation at Gandarbal there was a house-boat waiting to take the party to Baramulla, and there were other house-boats too belonging to visitors. Out of one of these, as we were walking along the bank, emerged two exceedingly pretty English sisters, to whom our prisoner waved his manacled hands. "Handcuffs! A British officer—disgraceful!" one said so that we could hear. "*Brutal!*" the other echoed. Of course those flashing eyes extinguished all satisfaction of three subalterns, one N.C.O. and three other ranks at the successful ending of a disagreeable job. Indeed I doubt whether the official letter I afterwards got with the thanks of the Commander-in-Chief was any real consolation. I wonder whether Lady —— and Lady ——, as they are now, remember the occasion!

From Kashmir I went to join the small community of soldiers and Politicals doing watch and ward beyond the snowy passes. Cut off from the outer world during the winter—rationing was carried out during the summer when the passes were open—we lived a happy and care-free existence. Our duties were principally connected with Kings—the Kings of Astor, Gilgit, Punial, Hunza, Nagar, Ghizar, Yasin, Ishkoman and more besides. Like Chedorlaomer and the others of the Book of Genesis, their occupation had been 'smiting' one another till the days when the country was 'Sandemanised' by Sir A. Durand and his lieutenants, a word which implies

DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN POLITICAL

control without annexation or administration. "I know of no case in history," wrote Lord Curzon, "where conquest was so rapidly followed by contentment and where the beaten party became the fellow combatants and allies of the victors." So in the days of Robertson, the explorer of Kafiristan, Macmahon and Godfrey, we were chiefly engaged in composing small tribal differences, raising and training levies for the defence of the northern passes against raids, and improving communications. In a country where hawking, polo and dancing have from time immemorial been passions rather than pastimes, sport was a common meeting ground. Once a year we had a specially big gathering of the clans devoted to ceremonials and games 'understood of the people,' such as polo, races, dancing, shooting from the saddle and—once only—that cruel Central Asian contest called *buz kashi*, in which mounted men ride and struggle for the possession of a goat which—at the commencement—was alive. It was a brave sight to see Khans, Mirs, Thums, Rajas, their Badakshan ponies all aglitter with silver, march with their retainers, their pipes and their kettledrums on the walled polo ground. The week was a full one. With the P. A. and his Indian Assistant we were once discussing in advance the programme for one of these meetings. Monday durbar, Tuesday races, and so for every day there were amusements till it came to Saturday. "Well, Khan Sahib," said the Chief, "what shall it be on Saturday?" "On Saturday, sir," he replied, "I think the Kings would like a holiday!" So, when in '97 the North-West Frontier was in a blaze, the tribes of Gilgit and Chitral in the north, like those of Baluchistan in the south, remained good as gold, and I was able to take leave to be a newspaper correspondent with Sir William Lockhart's troops in Tirah. Riding with a single mounted servant from Gilgit by the Babusar Pass to Abbottabad, I reached

the Samana in time to see the Gordons and Dorsets carry out their magnificent assault on Dargai. And so on to Bagh; and when that 'show' was over, back to Gilgit.

I happened to be in camp with the P. A. on the Astor flank of stupendous Diamur, otherwise known as Nanga Parbat, when the famous climber Mummery was lost. The other members of the climbing party were Bruce, Collie and Hastings, and no finer team could be imagined. Bruce, a schoolfellow of mine, athlete, cricketer, boxer, fencer, wrestler, shot, Alpinist and *raconteur*, was the best all-round boy or man it has been my lot to meet. The attempt on the peak from the Chilas side had been abandoned, and Mummery with two Gurkhas started to reach Astor and the road back to Kashmir over a col which separates the Diamurai and Rakhiot valleys, while the others went round by a lower route. Mummery and the Gurkhas were never seen again. I went round afterwards with a local man who had been with the party to search the glaciers at the head of the Diamurai valley, and then saw how the traverse he had attempted was swept by terrific ice avalanches. Climbers at that time did not know as much about Himalayan conditions as they do now. Even by modern siege methods, however, a great many of the Western Himalayan peaks are surely impregnable, and among them I should reckon Nanga Parbat.¹ By local people Mummery's gallant figure has been added to the legendary beings, the fairies, the snake, the tree with jewelled fruits, that haunt its snow-bannered summit.

The Kashmir province of Ladak ('Little Tibet'), also 'beyond the passes,' was my next post, a land of pigtailed infidels and polytheists, of monasteries, prayer flags, *chortens* and all the insignia of the pure

¹ The attack on Nanga Parbat undertaken this year by a German party failed.

DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN POLITICAL

religion of Buddha run crazy. My predecessor was the versatile and witty Chenevix-Trench. I was the first 'British Joint Commissioner' to take a wife there, and we shall not forget the procession up the main street (and polo ground) of Leh on our arrival. There was the Wazir of Ladak with his myrmidons, many of the Lama hierarchy, the *Aksakal* of the Central Asian *sarai*, traders from Yarkand and a heterogeneous crowd of sightseers. The air was full of dust and vibrating with the boom of great copper trumpets—a Ladaki Lord Mayor's show. As we passed the State schools we were inveigled inside to hear the Mongol-eyed boys and girls burst into a shrill chorus:—

"Happee happée is the day
Mrs Kennion came to Leh,
May we always be happée and gay——"

There were quite a lot of stanzas in this cheerful vein.

The Political at Leh, with a Kashmiri colleague, is concerned with the trade between India and Chinese Turkestan and Tibet, an interesting and romantic commerce in goods such as silk, musk, turquoise, borax, tea, jade, *charas* (a 'hemp drug,' the importation of which into India is now prohibited), furs, gold and mules, its methods differing in no way from those of olden days when the trade between China and Europe was overland *via* Persia. The maintenance and improvement of the road from Srinagar to the frontier on the top of the 18,000 feet Karakoram Pass, 430 miles of track some 8 to 10 feet wide, through a country of crags and torrents and glaciers, was also among the duties of the British Joint Commissioner. So that if on assuming his predecessor's mantle he had no expert knowledge of mountain roads and bridges and the construction of shingle-roofed caravanserais liable to



be buried in snow during the winter, he very soon acquired it. There was boat-building, too—the ferry-boat that carried traders and their loads, not their baggage animals, across the tempestuous Shioik River. The latter had to swim or drown, and it was an extraordinary sight to see the broad river dotted with ponies' heads among the 'white horses' and drifting down-stream, apparently to destruction. As for the boat, as the country was treeless, timbers had to be hewn and transported from the forests of Kashmir for its construction. I remember taking a seat in my new boat for her trial trip. The other passengers were some Yarkandi traders, one of whom as he got in quoted Sadi with magnificent gesture: "What fear has he of the waves of the ocean who has Noah for a pilot!" The delicacy of the compliment must, I fear, be explained. To Moslems of the East the patriarch of the deluge is not what he is to some of us, a quaint figure in a brown overcoat and top-hat who tumbles out of the Noah's ark along with birds and animals and his relations, Shem, Ham and Japhet, from whom he is indeed barely distinguishable, but a more noble figure—nothing less than the father of all shipbuilders! The mystery and charm of Tibet, like a magnet, drew the writer across Ladak's shadowy frontier three years in succession—to Rudok one year, to Gartok the next, and once with his wife in pursuit of yak and other beasts that need no oxygen to the lofty plains beyond the Lanak La.

The powers above gave the box of chessmen a shake and we were in a little State of Rajaputana, a country of jungles and panthers and Bhils, where under Pinhey, the Resident at Udaipur, I 'ran' the government during a minority. The young Maharawal was being educated at one of the Chief's colleges, only coming home for the holidays. He was a delightful little boy, whose espousal to the daughter of a suitable Rajput house gave the paternal Resident



DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN POLITICAL

many moments of anxious thought till the matter was happily concluded. It was about that time that I have a recollection of Malcolm Moore, the doctor, getting up in the Resident's drawing-room to sing somewhat wickedly, but *con molto espressione*, "Rest on, poor chaperone, thy work is done!" Another recollection: the boy Maharawal reciting in our own drawing-room a humorous piece entitled "The Man with the Single Hair." He did it with much histrionic ability and all the appropriate gestures, but one could not help wondering how the accomplishment was going to serve him when in due time he became ruler of his State. But that was before the era of Round Table Conferences and Chambers of Princes. Now, of course——

I used to preside at the meetings of the State Council to discuss such questions as whether the ancient elephant Ram Pershad should be longer maintained as the pensioner of a small and imppecunious State. Being a matter involving Rajput *izzat* (honour), it was decided in Ram Pershad's favour, so he and his *mahout* and his *mahout's* wife and family may possibly still be dividing between them the chupatties that should have gone to fill his cavernous frame to repletion. Then there were 'Border Courts.' Bhils are simple creatures, 'looking not above man's possibility,' and given to dancing, drunkenness and cattle lifting, the latter, in this chessboard of a country, being generally arranged to take place within the borders of some neighbouring State. To adjust such matters, Border Courts were periodically held, presided over by the Politicals of the States concerned. Claims were heard and either accepted or rejected. Then a cash balance was struck between State and State and the money paid over. It was rather as if the city fathers of, say, Manchester and Liverpool sat down together to adjust at public expense claims for burglaries committed by Manchester criminals



in Liverpool and by Liverpudlians in Manchester. However, it worked better than might have been expected.

There was a famine that year due to shortage of rain and the failure of the *mhowa* crop, and relief works occupied much of my time. They took the simple form of earthwork dams among the hills for the storage of rain-water. Round such works little villages of booths sprang up, peopled by Bhils in varying stages of starvation. A living wage was paid in cash, and *bunnias*' shops were opened where food could be bought. Simple and efficient, and some insurance against future famines, these works were the means of saving many lives, for by good fortune cholera, that dread accompaniment of famine, was absent.

The frontier State of Chitral, our next temporary home, is a labyrinth of vast mountains, cloven by the deep valleys that constitute the habitable portion. Here I followed Gurdon, an officer who beyond all others that I have met deserves to be called the 'perfect' Political. That, ever since the siege of '95, Chitral has remained the model frontier State, is chiefly due to him. Here the Political was a sort of Providence, 'immanent' so far as might be, and over-ruling an old-time feudalism in which an overlord (the Mehtar), nobles, vassals, serfs and ecclesiastics played their traditional parts. He heard the prayers of all, and while exercising no interference with the system—except in the matter of slavery—did a good deal to temper its severities. The *pax Britannica* that followed the Chitral Expedition had led as usual to an increase in the population and a shortage of cultivated land. To remedy the former no expedient such as the polyandry practised in Ladak was possible in this, a Moslem country, and so the construction of irrigation channels to bring fresh lands under cultivation became an urgent matter. Chitralis are marvellously

clever at judging the exact spot where water should be taken off a mountain river to serve a dry alluvial fan that may be miles lower down. These little aqueducts had often to be taken across the face of precipices or through tunnels, their construction involving great labour, so it was essential to locate the headworks with accuracy. Too high would entail enormously increased work, too low might result in the objective being missed altogether. Wonderful as the Chitralis were with their crude trial and error methods, the help freely given by the R.E. officer of the Drosh garrison with his levels and explosives was much appreciated. In fact it was a close thing between the engineer and the doctor which did most to make the presence of our small force popular.

The late Sir Harold Deane, the first Chief Commissioner of the then new Frontier Province, used to call his Assistant at Chitral the 'point of his spear,' and naturally intelligence work—what the Russians of the Pamirski post were up to, or how the bridge over the Oxus at Pattar Kesar was progressing—came within his duties. The Military Department also liked to have their independent sources of news. I received a cryptic assignation one day to meet someone nameless at dead of night. At the rendezvous I found he was an Intelligence officer disguised as a Mohammedan and bound for the north. I gave him what help and information I could, and he vanished. The following day the Mehtar, who happened to be visiting me, suddenly asked, "Sahib, *who* is the Englishman dressed like a Moslem that is putting up in my serai, and what is he doing?" "Sahib," he added, "if *you* desire news from beyond the frontier, it is well, ask me. From me nothing is hidden." It was as he stated. The Mehtar, whose loyalty was undoubted, had also unequalled sources of information. As an instance: a big proportion of the people of the Oxus valley were

murids (disciples) of the Maulai Pir, Shahzada Lais, a refugee from Afghanistan who had been given asylum in Chitral and was actually then the Mehtar's guest. The truth is, moreover—*pace* writers of frontier fiction—that an Englishman in disguise, however good a linguist, unless 'country born,' never takes in a native, although the latter may be polite enough to conceal the fact.

There were disputed frontiers. In the south the boundary with Afghanistan had been delimited by a joint Commission whose award had been based on a partially incorrect map; so it happened that anyone visiting the Chitrali village of Arandu was liable to be shot at from the little Afghan fort at Birkot, situated on the far side of a river which officially was not in existence. In the north, graziers from the Afghan province of Wakhan used to bring their yaks over the Baroghil Pass for pasturage on the down-like 'Pamir' on the Chitral side of this extraordinary 'depression' (only some 12,000 feet high), and it was feared that the custom might give rise to territorial claims. Not that the Wakhis in their high boots and fur caps would be guilty of rifle shots, for, like all the nomadic peoples of Central Asia, they were as kindly and inoffensive as their own yaks. This little matter was settled by their agreeing to pay nominal grazing fees to the Mehtar of Chitral.

Mention of the Baroghil recalls a memorable incident. Lord Kitchener was making a personal inspection of India's mountain frontiers, and it fell to me to arrange his tour while in Chitral. We had the honour of entertaining him and his staff—Birdwood, Hubert Hamilton, Victor Brook and Marker—in the quaint Chitrali house that had been turned into a Residency. During his stay a *darbar* was held, at which Kitchener presented the Mehtar with a gold-mounted sword and other *tosha-khana* articles and made a speech which struck me as

perfect both in manner and matter. The Mehtar some time afterwards, when talking of the occasion, said to me in a whisper, "and how *terrible* (*haulnak*) the War Lord's visage!" Perhaps he really thought it terrible, or it may be he thought that a 'War Lord's' face *ought* to be terrible. Is it not this idea that formerly caused Oriental warriors to put on terrific masks? Kitchener preferred walking to riding in this mountainous country, and in the course of his tour he and his staff walked up most of the better-known frontier passes, thereby convincing themselves that however possible it may have been for the mobile hordes of ancient times—Macedonian, Yuechi, Tartar, Mongol—to penetrate these terrific defiles, no such adventure was possible for modern armies. The last pass Kitchener visited was the Baroghil, and the day following he was to cross a minor pass on his return to Gilgit and Kashmir, when, so to speak, he would be outside my diocese. So I planned a wonderful parting lunch on the top of the Baroghil; a *tour de force* in that desolate spot, where with one hand you could pour a libation that would eventually find its way into the Indian Ocean, and with the other one that would in course of time reach the Aral Sea. We arrived at the spot very hungry and a bitter wind was blowing, but of cook, servants, lunch, not a sign! The eyes of the staff were upon me. I told my levies to light a fire of brush-wood, jumped on my pony and hurried back towards our last camp. Presently I met a solitary Chitrali servant with one big cooking-pot and his saddle-bags full of tinned foods. He had started before the others, who had somehow gone astray. We returned to the starving party on the pass. The pot was put on the fire, and His Excellency, standing over it, assumed direct command. His staff were directed to hack open the tins. "Butter," cried Kitchener, and in went the contents of a tin, which he began to stir with his walking-

stick. Followed sausages, jam, curry powder, bacon, condensed milk, everything went the same way. We had just reached the stage for serving hot in the empty tins when the cook and the rest of the *bandobast* was espied in the distance. But for lunch we ate 'War Lord's Stew.' It was wonderful.

After a period of furlough I found myself at Meshed in North-West Persia, officiating as Consul-General for Sykes (now Sir Percy), where my wife and children, after a journey remarkable for disagreeable incidents, joined me. There was a Russian Consul-General at Meshed too, and as at that time it seemed that nothing could prevent the decrepit Persian Empire falling a prey to Russian ambitions, the rivalry between the two institutions was tense, though disguised under an appearance of cordiality, of which dinners were the visible sign. Those dinners! The mixed nationalities—Persian, Russian, Belgian, British! The mixed drinks! It was enough to ruin the constitution of the most hardened Consul-General, not to speak of that of his poor wife.

When the Persian Governor of Khorassan made his official call after my arrival he put forward a particular request that the Indian sowars of my escort should not draw their swords when I rode through the bazaars on my return visit. This apparently had been a little bit of 'swank' introduced by a predecessor. The Governor explained that he had really no objection whatever in the case of our well-behaved Indians, but he feared that the Russians might follow suit, and "if the Cossacks were to draw their *shushkas*, they would certainly use them." I set his fears at rest. My return visit to the Governor was marked by the spectacle of two gory corpses lying outside the Ark, as his residence was called. They were those of two bandits. The Governor, it appeared, had gone for a ride, and on his return his horse had shied at and refused to pass the men

who under a guard were awaiting him at the main gate. The Governor told his beads—guilty or not guilty—and as ‘guilty’ had it he ordered their execution, and the throat-cutting was carried out there and then. It was shocking, but one must not forget that the accused would probably have preferred the even chances given them to standing their trial, which might well have resulted in their being planted alive and head downwards in concrete.

In spite of such grim reminders that one was in a self-governing Oriental State, Consular work in Persia was rather comic opera. In Seistan, to which place I was moved on Sykes’ return, the Russians had been at the back of a rather serious riot against our Consulate. A stupendous amount of correspondence with our Minister at Teheran eventually resulted in the Governor of Seistan coming to the Consulate in full dress and with an escort to tender apologies for the insult to the British flag, while two leading rioters were to be caused to eat in public a hundred sticks apiece. In other words, they were to be beaten on the soles of the feet till a hundred sticks were broken. Persian lictors and their victims have, however, certain well-understood methods of arriving at an accommodation satisfactory to both. The feet are held soles upward in a sort of stocks, blows are given, sticks broken and there are realistic yells, but—*vox et praeterea nihil*—or nearly so. A typical but more tragic incident was the fall of a dragoman of the Russian Consulate from the roof of that building. It may have been a coincidence that he was suspected of friendship with the Indian Assistant of our rival institution.

‘Gun-running’ was then at its peak. Consignments of arms that had eluded our gun-boats in the Persian Gulf were landed at desolate spots on the coast, and carried by strong parties of Afghan braves across intervening deserts and ranges till they



reached the 'God-granted' kingdom of Afghanistan. With my Indian escort and Seistani levies we made several attempts by hard riding and forced marches at intercepting some of them, but the impossibility of getting timely intelligence and the enormous area of desert country to be guarded defeated us. It was on the sea that the traffic was eventually put a stop to. Such expeditions, however, led to the examination of an alternate route for northern-bound trading caravans—a route which, lying through the Palang Koh range, avoided the swamps and seasonally inundated areas of Seistan. It was this route that was adopted as the line of the Eastern Persian cordon established during the war to intercept the German parties sent through Persia to Afghanistan for the purpose of propaganda, so perhaps our efforts were not quite wasted.

An experiment that much interested my wife and myself was that of establishing a line of homing pigeons from Seistan to our nearest garrison in Baluchistan, which it was hoped would be of value in case of trouble, for here we were just short of 500 miles from the nearest railhead. The pigeons failed, owing either to the terrific winds of Seistan, or else to birds of prey; it may be to both. They simply disappeared. For the rest, the Consul's duties were mainly connected with the support of our Indian traders in their suits, and, by means of judicious pressure on local officials, the improvement of the long road from Koh-i-Malik-Siah ('Hill of the Black Angel') to Meshed and of the caravanserais where weary men and beasts found their needed rest.

After furlough and then a short spell as Additional Sessions Judge in the North-West Frontier, I was posted to the Political Agency at the Malakand. Our bungalow, like an eyrie on a crag, overlooked the fighting ground of '97; 'Gibraltar,' crowned by a blockhouse; 'Gretna Green'; the 'Crater.' Be-

yond, for many miles, north, east and west, a mountainous country inhabited by restless tribes. Some were democracies, carrying their love for equality and liberty—but not fraternity—to such a pitch that there were periodic swappings of cultivated lands and even of villages; these occasions offering welcome opportunities for bloodshed. The territories of such communistic tribes were easily recognisable: wretched houses, no gardens, no orchards. Why indeed should anyone improve a property that to-morrow would pass into other hands? Other tribes acknowledged Khans of limited power, whom the fear of rebellion or assassination caused to walk warily. Through this region, where inter-tribal and inter-faction feuds were endemic, wound the long road to Chitral, the slender thread that connected that outpost with India.

During our first year at the Malakand, in the hope that rivalry in sports might here, as in Gilgit, prove to be a better solvent of tribal enmities than bullets 'whistling down the pass,' I had a great sports gathering. Leaving their rifles at the levy post at Chakdarra, clansmen trooped in from far and near, practically every tribe in the purview of the Agency being represented, and among them even reverend gentlemen like *mullahs* and Akhundzadas. A polo match between the garrison and the Chitralis was played before such a crowd as the Khar polo ground had not seen since the united tribesmen made their desperate attack on the Malakand. The rules of the game as played in Asia in the days of Siawush and Afrasiab and by these hillmen of the present time differ from ours as much as those of Rugby and Association football, but in spite of such small difficulties play was as good-humoured as it was keen. The Chitralis' ponies were inferior, but their good hitting gave them a narrow victory. It would be fair perhaps to mention also as a contributing cause their freedom from all conventions



about crossing, catching their opponents' sticks over their ponies' backs and suchlike crimes. There was tent-pegging, of course, and the usual sports for the troops of the garrison. What caused more excitement than anything was the scramble called a fell race in Cumberland and a *khud* race in the Himalayas. For this event the Mehtar of Chitral had brought down a team of Bashgalis, lean as greyhounds, the like of which could hardly be seen elsewhere. The course was stiff and precipitous. Round the rugged rocks those ragged rascals ran to such effect that the other teams, Gurkhas and Pathans—first-class men in any other company, were outclassed. These Bashgalis were representatives from the tribe called Kafirs by others but not by themselves, a remnant of unknown origin existing in the remotest glens on the Chitral-Afghan border, the people referred to in Kipling's 'The Man who would be King.' They gave us, too, an interesting display of archery, for at that time they were among the few people of the world with whom dagger and bow had remained national weapons. At night the skirl of *sarnais* mingled with the wild throb of *dhols* drew the crowd to where, round a huge bonfire, goodly young Pathans moved and stamped in their impassioned dance, and the Chitralis in their smoother and more rhythmical gyrations. The fitful glare lit up the encircling mass of humanity and played on the ring of wild keen faces of that unmistakable stamp seen only on India's North-West Frontier. It was a scene for an artist. The inclusion of a Bashgali 'dance,' interesting and picturesque though it was, was a mistake, for their measured steps constituted in their own country a religious ceremony which here, as a feature in a variety entertainment, was out of place; and it was moreover watched by the Moslem crowd in silence and with sinister eyes. To my relief the programme was carried through with never a shot fired in anger, nor even 'a knife thrust

DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN POLITICAL

unawares.' So the crowds dispersed and the truce was at an end. For my part I felt as if the past few days I had been sitting on a powder magazine. An amusing memento of that occasion remains in my possession in the shape of a blue velvet banner embroidered in golden letters which a friendly Khan had attached to the big durbar tent. The inscription began thus imaginatively : " Colonel Kennion, Sahib Bahadur, with his sweet voice cries out to the men of Dir, Swat, Bajaur and Chitral, ' come always.' " Hyperbole indeed !

I found the political waters of the Malakand a swirl of cross-currents. Among the Chiefs of Dir, Bajaur and Swat, the Nawab of Dir, whose country lay astride the Chitral road, was the most powerful. He was a tall handsome man, half insane, with a stammer that made his talk unintelligible to all but his intimates, and a leper ; but he had behind him a gang of clever rogues, who had their agents in Peshawar. He was possessed moreover of ample funds, here as elsewhere the sinews of war, obtained by the exploitation of the immensely valuable deodar forests of the Panjkora, which, regardless of the interests of his State and contrary to his promises to Government, he was converting into ready cash as fast as ever he could. His ambition was to subjugate all the surrounding tribes, especially those of Swat, which would give him control of more deodar forests ; and so he would become great, even as the King of Kabul. The Swatis, living under this threat, turned to the British Government and asked to be brought under control ; some even claimed protection as a right, alleging promises made by a former Political.

Speaking generally, two policies have been tried on the North-West Frontier of India. One is known as the ' close border ' system, non-interference with the tribes beyond the administrative frontier and occasional fierce punishments for accumulated mis-



deeds. The other is the 'Sandeman' system, peaceful penetration, control and education. The former is retributive and leaves behind it a legacy of hatred.¹ The latter is reformatory, and, apart from its being the only policy worthy of a great Power, has been justified by success wherever tried—for instance, in Baluchistan in Sandeman's time and in Waziristan quite recently. In the Malakand Agency especially our commitments in Chitral indicated the Sandeman policy as the only possible or right one. At the time I am speaking of, however, the close border system was in favour. So when the Nawab's encroachments led to a combination against him, mostly by tribes and factions friendly to Government, and the defeated ruler fled for refuge to my camp, then on the Chitral border, instead of the opportunity being embraced as one for making a general settlement in the interest of the tribesmen themselves and for the security of the Chitral road, a policy of strict non-interference was decreed. Disappointment at Government's attitude and the weight of the Nawab's money-bags then brought the balance down with a bang in the opposite direction, and one night he secretly left my camp to put himself at the head of his reconstituted forces. Some days later from the Laram Pass I looked down, with feelings it is difficult to describe, to see in flames the fort of the ruined Abdulla Khan of Robat, a friend who in days gone by had, on that same pass, opposed successfully the Sartor fakir when he had led his fanatical hordes to cut our communications with Chitral. Incidents of this kind, though happily rare, are not unknown elsewhere than on the Indian frontier. This much may be said, that the responsibility for them has rarely rested with the man on the

¹ The modern method of using aircraft and bombs seems to me to have all the worst features of the 'close border' system. Would it be unfair to compare it to a schoolmaster going up into a gallery to 'buzz' inkpots at a room full of unruly schoolboys?

DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN POLITICAL

spot who has to do with human beings, but rather with authorities at a distance swayed by considerations of expediency, sometimes wrongly called 'wider issues.' Perhaps our present-day over-centralisation is a contributing cause.

The idea of bringing water from the Swat River through the Malakand range by means of a tunnel to irrigate the arid lands on the southern side first struck a former Political, Colonel Godfrey, and the project was successfully completed in my time. The headworks and tunnel lay in the territory of the Ranizai, a tribe whose proximity to the Malakand forts had led to their being brought under our protection. On their own behalf they raised no protest against the construction of the canal—indeed they benefited by it to some extent—but their representations that the tombs of some revered ancestors lay on the line first selected led to the abandonment of the original headworks after thousands of rupees had been expended. After that they succeeded in finding more mouldering tombstones. The construction of the canal would indeed have been impossible had not the discovery also been made that the outraged feelings of the ghosts concerned could be appeased by cash payments to their descendants! At the opening ceremony by the Chief Commissioner an enormous crowd, with a sprinkling of British from India, were present at the headworks to see the sluice-gates raised to let the water through. Then the whole assembly, helter-skelter, in cars, tongas, mounted and on foot, poured along the road, over the Amandarra and Malakand Passes, like children that have made a tunnel in the sands, to see the water tumble out of the black hole at the base of a cliff at the far side of the range; and tumble out it did. And in spite of the prophecies of holy *mullahs* about the evil results that must follow from making a river flow in the opposite direction to what God intended, nothing untoward



happened. But I forget. There was a minor evil in the partial disappearance of *mahseer* from the Swat River; but this was not due, as one might think, to the fish taking this new road open to them out of a spirit of adventure, but to the leakage of gelignite blasting cartridges issued to Pathan miners during the construction of the tunnel. To a Pathan, as is well known, the opportunity of acquiring arms or explosives licitly or illicitly offers a temptation that is irresistible.

We had just arrived home on leave in '14 when the war broke out, and in October I found myself one of a lot of interpreters on board a steamer bound for Marseilles. They were to meet the Indian Expeditionary Force, their mission that of smoothing the rough places of France for Indian units. They were a strange assortment. There were three others of the Indian Political Service, a budding diplomat, a merchant from Constantinople, an ex-officer from the — Lancers (very much ex) connected with racehorses and champagne, two German spies (afterwards shot, I believe), a casino keeper, a clergyman and other queer fish too numerous to mention. One of the most notable was M. Bertrand of the celebrated Salle d'Armes, who at once fell to work on his own job, for he formed up squads of 'interpreters' on deck, complete with their swords, and instructed them what to do and how to do it when they should find themselves—as they doubtless soon would—engaged in single combat with similarly armed Germans. As, however, the purpose of this sketch is to tell something of the normal lights and shades of an Indian Political's life, among which nothing connected with the Great War can be included, I will say no more about this time beyond that the East called, and after service in Iraq and Persia it was from Baku that my wife and I took train to Batoum, and so home to resume my interrupted furlough.

DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN POLITICAL

For a last tour of duty in the East I had the good fortune to serve in Nepal, a country interesting in her past but very much more so for what the future may bring. Independent and lying without the Indian system, Nepal has, of course, no voice in the determination of India's future. Yet she is not merely an interested spectator of the changes which for good or evil are there being introduced, but must be vitally affected by them. How vitally may be realised by the bare mention of a few of the relevant factors. To start with, out of India's 320 millions (approximate), nearly 70 per cent are Hindus. Nepal is the only existing Hindu kingdom. Geographically, Nepal has her back to the great wall of the Himalaya, her face towards India. Her rivers, the potential source of unlimited power, lower down become Indian rivers. Her trade and her connection with the sea depend on Indian railways. Large numbers of Nepalese subjects find employment in India; while in military estimation the Gurkha regiments of the Indian Army (Nepalese subjects) rank second only to our British regiments, and may be led by British officers *only*. Lastly, though the list is far from complete, Nepal has treaties with the British Government touching matters which under different circumstances might well become controversial. Assuredly, when considering India's future, Nepal cannot be left out of the picture!

I may conclude with a word about the future of the Service that has formed the subject of this sketch. So long as India is torn by religious and racial antagonisms (which have their ramifications on and beyond the frontier), and so long as we as a people are determined that India shall not be allowed to relapse into the chaos from which we rescued her, defence and all the complicated matters connected with the frontier must continue to be under the ultimate control of Parlia-



ment; while to deal with them on the spot there must continue to be, as now, a Foreign Department directly under the Viceroy. So long again as the Indian princes cherish their connection with the Crown and rely on the Crown for the protection of their rights and privileges, there must be, as now, a Political Department to maintain liaison between them and the Viceroy, the Crown's representative. The functions of these two Departments have only an indirect connection with Indian administration, and it is necessary that they should be preserved from the incalculable influences of Indian parties and politics. British personnel may, in too hurried pursuit of an ideal that is in itself worthy, be withdrawn from other Indian services (not without loss to India's silent millions), but in the case of these two Departments no such change is conceivable. It may be anticipated, I think, that for many years to come they will offer to our sons careers that for variety, interest—and I may add entertainment—bear comparison with any in the Empire.



III.

JANDAR, ORDERLY.

A TRIFLING question had arisen between the Indian Authorities and the 'God-granted Government of Afghanistan,' as the Amir, Abdur-Rahman Khan, elected to call himself. Strife between the herdsmen of this and that tribe, flocks raided, a few men killed. The Political Officer of the frontier district of Kohat was to trek far in among the purple mountains of Yaghistan, 'the land of the unruly,' to meet the Amir's representative, taking with him a suitable escort, 150 rifles of one hard-bitten frontier regiment, the writer's proud charge, 150 of another, a section of a mountain battery, a troop of Indian cavalry.

The romance of a first march beyond the frontier is a thing that marks an epoch in the life of an officer of the Indian Army. Each morning, long before light, out of a diminutive tent, in a camp sparkling with fires, to meet a bitter wind, 'the wind of Hangu,' and inhale a pungent air laden with dust more apparent to taste than to sight. A confused din of shouting men, yelling camels, whinnying mules. Hot tea, eggs and chupatties, with a proportion of wholesome earth, are to be had within range of a noble fire. Out of the turmoil troopers emerge, trot by and disappear in the gloom; then an infantry advance guard muffled up in sheepskin poshtins. Following them the mountain guns, clickety-clack, and soon the whole column is on

DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN POLITICAL

the move towards the mountains, where dark valleys mysteriously open. Every day brings infinite possibilities of adventure. As a matter of fact, the march up the Kurram Valley—I am speaking of the days before its occupation—except for a few shots exchanged with the gang of a noted outlaw known as Chikai, was blank from a soldier's point of view, though otherwise not without incident. Notably, after reaching camp each day was there not the blue Kurram River a-calling? C., who in a previous phase of his career as a gunner had achieved fame by his rendering of the 'Byle Battery' at the station gaffs—

“With a hainya, hainya, hainya, hainya,
Twist their tails and go ——”

was a fisherman, and if my catching a fish a pound heavier than his biggest was any criterion, he nearly made me one. At some camps the Mess Secretary was insistent about birds for the pot. Jandar, my Pathan orderly, was clever at mimicking the call of the chakor partridge—and, with the exception of a cock grouse, there is no bird with a gamier call than he—his efforts often eliciting a chorus from a bare, brown and apparently birdless hillside. Then there was the affair of the porcupine. One bright morning, as the column was winding along a path crossing the broad bosom of a mountain, my native officer came hurrying up and saluted. “Presence,” said he breathlessly, “a *sahi* has been seen. If the order is given, a few of the young men will go.” For all I knew to the contrary, a *sahi* might be the mad mullah himself, but the order was given. Four lithe young Sikhs in full marching order dash down the hillside fixing bayonets as they go and disappear from sight. Far below, a small black object crosses a bare spur and is gone. Then four figures running, the glint of a bayonet. The small black dot emerges

again and is again lost, the men following. They appear and disappear like a scene in a cinema; then the hunt is gone. They brought the poor old porcupine into camp all right and it was cooked and eaten by the Sikh company. "Sahib," Jandar remarked somewhat untruthfully, "these Sikhs will eat anything!"

How much a young officer in the East often owes to some brown-skinned henchman who, nominally filling a humble rôle, is to him at once a guide, a servant and a friend—a debt too often carried very light-heartedly. My orderly, a trans-border Yusufzai, enlisted in the Frontier Force, was such a one. He was a typical Pathan. Lean and wiry in build, with keen features, a love curl down each cheek from under his tightly bound *safa*—even as copied with no bad effect by the modern young woman of the West—he was a picture to fill the eye. Indeed he did no discredit to that far-distant fellow-tribesman of his, one Saul, the son of Kish—"a choice young man and a goodly. There was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he!"

Sometimes after a long march, which I did riding and he on his feet carrying pack and rifle, I tried to get down to the river unknown to him. But it was no good. His duty was to guard his Sahib, and sure enough I would have barely started spinning before a glance round would show me Jandar sitting on a boulder, his rifle across his knees, looking, looking. His, too, the task of teaching me Pushtu, a tongue wild and rough as the land in which it is spoken. Consider the lingual gymnastics demanded in a sentence such as this: *Har yo sari khapal khaza sara pakhpal takhtawala*. Translated: "Every man ran off with his own wife." The sentence, besides being a sort of pronunciation test, a shibboleth, constituted for a Pathan—a stress being laid on the word *own*—a jest of infinite humour. In spite of the serious consequences that usually follow, Pathans

are addicted to running off with wives, but not their own.

In this country of savage vendettas there is a saying that trouble comes from one of three things—*zar*, *zamin*, *zan* (gold, land, women)—and somehow Satan seems to find the latter the most useful of the three. Jandar has never run off with anyone else's wife, but he was nevertheless born to a vendetta, the story of which is worth telling. A man named Mohammed Jan had come to believe that his wife was engaged in an intrigue with a neighbour called Hussein. So one fine day he stalked him from behind a wall as he was working in his fields and shot him dead. This was quite proper and justifiable according to the Pathan code, if *only* he had completed the job and killed the lady too. The idea is that if there were no such condition, a man might, alleging an intrigue, safely kill anybody. A wife, however, is a valuable commodity, worth perhaps 200 rupees, and no man in his senses would destroy his own property without cause. But Mohammed Jan's wife was fair to look on; in short, he omitted to finish off the matter. His village Jirga—we may call it the 'parish council'—accordingly pronounced Mohammed Jan a murderer, and to avoid more killing, which in this happy land tends to have a snowball character, told him to go and live elsewhere. So he betook himself to the Buner country. After the lapse of some time tidings reached him that Hussein's son, now of age, purposed to revenge his father's death by slaying the little son of Mohammed Jan's daughter. This was not 'cricket.' Mohammed Jan hied him to the nearest scribe and dictated a petition to the Jirga praying them to prevent such a wicked action, as he alone was the *dushmandar* (enemy). Much wagging of beards in the parish council resulted in an award which was strictly in accordance with the Pathan code and may be set forth. The son of the deceased

Hussein, it ran, might lawfully kill either the murderer Mohammed Jan or Mohammed Jan's son, but not his daughter or her child—Pathan vendettas descend in tail male. If Mohammed Jan's son and Mohammed Jan himself both died natural deaths, Hussein's heir was to be paid 360 rupees as blood money by Mohammed Jan's heir. If, however, in spite of the award, Hussein's son did kill Mohammed Jan's daughter, or her child, he would have to pay 200 rupees—to the parish council! The award thus provided suitably and equitably for all contingencies and at the same time vindicated the majesty of the law. Now Mohammed Jan had died, and my Jandar happened to be his son. Hussein's son, on whom devolved the duty of slaying Jandar, was also enlisted in the Sirkar's army. They might meet in uniform and part peaceably, but in mufti it would be another business. So Jandar lived in the expectation that sooner or later his fate would be a bullet from the unseen, from behind a rock, from a smoke hole in a house where he slept, from a roof in a bazaar, but almost certainly a bullet—that is, if he did not kill Hussein's son first!

In due course we arrived at the place where our Political was to meet the Afghan. The last camp was pitched on a broad boulder-strewn plain, far from rising ground or walled villages which might tempt snipers, and round it in frontier fashion sprang bastioned breastworks. The meeting with the Afghan, whose camp was a little distance away, was to be a full-dress affair. A *shamiana* tent, carpets, red cloth, flags, chairs, a guard of honour and a crowd of onlookers made a splash of colour on the stark khaki waste. C., the gunner, had gone out half-way with a few troopers to escort the Amir's representative. The Political would meet him no farther than the edge of the carpet. We, the smaller fry, were already in the durbar when the cavalcade arrived. The great man dismounted and proceeded

with Sir R. up the human rectangle, the while arms were presented and mountain guns roared as loud as they were able. The Afghan Sirdar was a fine upstanding figure, with a bushy black beard, the aquiline features of a Durrani and a haughty expression. Unfortunately for the dignity of his appearance, before leaving Kabul he must have visited one of those shops that sell uniforms exported by second-hand dealers in European capitals. The uniform, with helmet complete, worn by the Sirdar was in a previous existence that of our well-known and esteemed friend, Robert, the London policeman ! The officer commanding our escort, who was of plethoric habit and humorous, nearly had a fit, but it need not be said that when the time came for the Sirdar to leave the durbar, he did so not less satisfied with his appearance than when he entered it.

For many days after the opening interview, diplomatic conversations continued, and we settled down and made the time pass happily with shooting and fishing. Most often, however, C. and I used to look north, towards the purple mountains that rose some eight miles away, their tops white with an early snowfall, and pictured to ourselves the mighty markhor that haply might be found among their gloomy precipices. But it was agreed that before asking the Political for leave to sleep out of camp, a psychological moment would have to be awaited or created. Sir R. was one who did not like incidents, and small blame to him.

Patience brought us the opportunity we wanted. One evening in our Mess of five the Political laid me a wager, half a dozen of champagne to a pencil-case, that I would not hit a man's figure with a Service revolver at 100 yards once in six rounds. The figure was marked out by C. in charcoal on a white target—a good large figure—we were all interested in the champagne—and it must be said it bore some resemblance to the Sirdar in his levee

costume. The last bullet found the bobby's helmet, and the self-appointed judges, consisting of the remainder of the Mess, unanimously declared that though I had lost the pencil-case, the Political must also be held to have lost the champagne, a decision that was worthy of a frontier Jirga. It was during the good feeling that prevailed after the debt had been liquidated that we took a promise from Sir R. that he would arrange for a safe-conduct for us from the Maliks of a big village at the foot of the mountains for two days' shooting.

The stars were paling one morning when C. and I got on our horses, and we reached the village before sunrise. There we waited in an orchard till our loads arrived, talked to the Maliks, drank their sweet tea and ate their delicious grapes. It was rather late when we started up a gorge, C. and I, our two orderlies, two *shikaris* from the village who knew the recesses of the mountains and the haunts of the wild goats, and a couple of men with blankets and grub. We had far to go to make our bivouac before dark and we climbed solidly for two hours, keeping our breath for the work ahead. Presently the gorge narrowed, with beetling crags on either side. Our eyes were on the ground in front of us picking our steps over the water-worn stones when Jandar challenged "Stand." Voices echoing among the cliffs came in reply, and we looked up to see three men of the mountains, their rifles slung on their backs, long Afghan knives at their waists, dingy red skull-caps on their heads, stepping in their grass sandals lightly as cats down the track we were ascending. Salutations were exchanged: "May you never be tired," "May you never be poor." Then from Jandar, "Who are you? Of what tribe? Where are you going? Where did you sleep last night?" and more. It seems they were Ghilzais going to buy cloth in Kurram. Others, they said, with an indicative

DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN POLITICAL

movement of the head, were following. I think it was the late Lord Curzon who, writing of the Lurs or some such villainous tribe of Persia, hit the nail with his customary exactitude when he remarked that travellers had described them either as 'strikingly handsome' or 'repulsively ugly,' according to the circumstances under which they met them. The remark is vividly true of many of the wild Highlanders of Asia, and, it may be added, would be not less true if applied to a panther! These men had brick-red faces that had felt the sun off the snow, hard grey eyes and rugged features. Their manners were free, like those of hillmen generally, and when their turn came to question us they spoke as equals. I think we should *then* have described them as 'strikingly handsome!' They seemed very interested about our rifles, in what country they were made, how much they cost, how far they would carry. One put out his hand to take C.'s rifle, a new sporting Martini, but it was intercepted by Jandar, an exhibition of suspicion that seemed to us rather unnecessary. A reminder by a *shikari* that we had far to go brought the talk to an end, and we parted on our respective roads. The sun had set when, pretty tired, we came to a place where the gorge opened to form a little plateau bounded on the one side by high rocks, on the other by the stream which gurgled along below a cliff. There were deodars in plenty and wood for a camp fire. This was our inn for the night. Some shepherd had built a lean-to shelter against the rock cliff in which we put our blankets and rifles. Having deposited their loads, the porters hurried back to the village. Lying before a blaze of pine logs after we had eaten and drunk, we lit our pipes and felt very satisfied with the world and our particular position in the Continent of Asia. It was a perfect night, not a breath of wind and no sound except the murmur of the stream :—

"The bed was made, the room was fit,
By punctual eve the stars were lit ;
The air was still, the water ran—
What need was there for maid or man ? "

We fell to discussing with the *shikaris* the programme for the morrow, which must surely end in our each bagging a *markhor* with horns resembling the branches of trees. "We shall all go together," the elder of the two was saying, "up the *tangi* to where it divides, and that spot we shall reach about cockcrow. From there——"

But he never finished his sentence, for crack, crack, there was the flash of rifles in the dark, and in a moment the picture had been changed. The *shikari* who had been speaking sprang to his feet and pitched forward into the fire.

Across the channel I believe they have a test for taxi-drivers based on the personal equation, the promptness with which an individual responds to a stimulus. It is intended to ascertain whether or no the examinee would do the right thing in a sudden emergency such as must often confront the tornado drivers of Paris. In such a test Jandar would have done well. Before C. and I had realised that we had struck a 'frontier incident,' he was on his feet, and in almost one movement had pulled the fallen man out of the fire and kicked the blazing logs right and left. For us the first thing was a wild search for rifles and cartridges in the darkness of the shelter, while the two orderlies, who had already fixed bayonets, were firing through the branches. Next moment we were choked with dust as an avalanche of stones came down. The shelter was clearly unhealthy, so hugging the rock face we crawled out, and after going a few yards found the cliff overhung slightly, giving cover from falling stones. Looking up, for one moment, I thought I saw a figure against the sky on the top of the cliff

and let him have the contents of my double barrel—at least, I hoped he had it—but with this exception our assailants were invisible.

Half an hour later, the rush we had expected had not come. Shots had been fired, but as we could not see our attackers, so they could not see us, and in the dark a flash is a poor mark to aim at. The wounded man was lying in the arms of the other *shikari*, who was repeating the *Kalma* in a monotonous murmur. Judging from the shots, we supposed the gang to number a dozen or more. Leisure then to think over our position and to realise the feelings of rats in a trap, for it seemed that whether they rushed us now or did things in a more leisurely manner at dawn, the end must be the same. How about the moon? We faced a little north of east, and could see a few stars of the Great Bear rising above the crags opposite. The moon was in its second quarter, and somewhere about two in the morning we should be in full illumination. C. was lately married. A sheet out of his pocket-book with a pencilled note put under a stone was his effort at farewell. We discussed schemes. C. favoured the idea of charging out; there would at any rate be a chance of one or two of the party getting away. This was a plan I liked not, for the good reason that I had kicked off my shoes while lying by the fire and the ground was covered with sharp stones. In that condition defence was more in my line than attack. As the loss of my shoes worried me not a little, presently I crawled to where the fire had been and groped about. One shoe I found and a good many hot cinders, but the other shoe I must have. I struck a match. Bang, bang, bang, the bullets sang away off the ground round me. "You blank fool," said C., with the emphasis on the blank. But when I crawled back, both shoes were in my hand. We were talking again of the chances of a rush out, when a voice came. "Jandar," it said,

"are you a Mussulman?" "Yes," he returned, "I am a Mussulman." "Bring your rifle and join us; what are you, a Mussulman, doing with these Faranghis?" No reply. "Are you a Mussulman," the voice began again; "we are twenty men; come and join us or if not we will send you to hell with the infidels." "We are six good rifles here," Jandar lied; "the porters have gone to show the escort the way from camp. I am a servant of the Sirkar, but if it were otherwise, it is not good to make friends with thieves. Please God we shall see you hanged at Thall." A volley was the answer to this. Their knowledge of Jandar's name seemed to connect the gang with the men we had met on the road. It had got very cold; I could hear someone's teeth chattering. The muttering of the *shikari* over the wounded man had ceased. He was dead. The voice began again, "*Jandar, te Mussulman ye?*" It seemed to have come nearer. We waited, but nothing happened. "Jandar," C. suddenly said, "where are you going?" My orderly was worming himself along the ground, rifle in hand. "To spy," he said, and disappeared in the darkness: For the life of me I could neither tell him not to go, nor to leave his rifle behind.

Though neither C. nor I had spoken, each knew what was in the other's mind. There are some classes of men in the Indian Army about whose behaviour in given circumstances it would be safe to bet. A Pathan is not of that kind. He has his code of honour and a certain nobility that enables one in rags to stride down the bazaar with the air of a king, but he is capable of ignoble deeds. The atmosphere of the frontier engenders a carelessness about human life, but a Pathan is not reckless with his own. Self-sacrificing bravery is not for him. Yet he will risk his skin for a rifle or a woman, while for his faith he will court death—do not the shining eyes of the houris of Paradise beckon? 'Faithful

DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN POLITICAL

to their salt' is a tribute that has been paid to many thousands of Pathans that have died for their foreign paymasters, but it is a tribute that cannot always be paid. It was near where we were now that a shot fired by a trans-border sepoy in one of our regiments warned the Afghans of Lord Roberts' night attack on the Paiwar Kotal. That must be accounted a brave deed too, when one considers that summary execution was the almost certain sequence.

Ten minutes passed, our eyes straining into the darkness. Something moved; there was a chink of a stone. Again another movement. "Who comes there?" said C. in a low voice. "Don't shoot, Sahib; it's me," said Jandar, and he crawled in. I felt beyond measure proud of my man and ashamed of my doubts. "Sahib," he said, "I think there may be sixteen or eighteen men. There is one path out; they have lighted a fire on that path and they sit in the dark. We cannot get through, but if God wills they will hear our shots at the village and send a *chigah* party." We knew well enough, however, that it was hardly possible that the shots would be heard, and that even if they were, men would not be likely to come out before dawn, and then only to save their faces.

There was not much talk after this. We made what scanty cover we could with our hands. The gang evidently did not intend to lose men over a rush, and would wait for the moon to show us up.

It was *shoma kalar*, the 'still of night,' as Pathans call the hours between one and three. We had watched the Great Bear swing round like the hands of a giant clock, dipping its stars one by one behind the black ridge on the far side of the gorge. A line of moonlight crept slowly down a prominent rock face. Then, quite suddenly, as it seemed, the point of a silver horn showed itself above the dark mass of mountain, and next moment we were in bright moonlight. The time had come. We waited tensely



for perhaps a quarter of an hour—it seemed long. Then from somewhere up the valley there came the sound of a falling stone.

Jandar said, "Praise to God they have gone!" He fired a shot, and for the first time there was no response. It was as he had said. We waited on, our rifles across our knees, till with the first glimmer of dawn a party came up from the village. They had heard the shots after all. Then we had tea. Marks were found showing that a wounded or dead man had been carried off. "Please God," said the orderly, "it is a life for a life."

The affair was gone into by the Political, who knew the frontier better than any man living. Piecing evidence together, it seems that it was a raiding gang whose original idea had been rifle-stealing from the camp or attacks on solitary sentries, followed perhaps by a little night firing. When they came across our small party everything went as might have been expected—except our escape. Jandar, to whose staunchness and brave bluff we probably owed our lives, was promoted to non-commissioned rank on our return to cantonments. In time he would have risen higher, but shortly afterwards he took leave to go to his country, and he never came back. Nor did he send any message. It was said by some in the regiment that being a religious man he had repented not having taken the chance offered him, religious merit and booty, and that he now had made amends by joining the 'fanatics' beyond the border, but this was unthinkable. It is more likely his end was the bullet from the unseen he expected. This, too, I never heard. As the Yusafzai officer in charge of his company remarked, "For a Pathan, from this world there are many doors of exit."

IV.

A B.S.O. IN CENTRAL INDIA.

WHEN, in the early days of the nineteenth century, the British Power finally rescued India from anarchy, the effect has been likened to the sudden freezing of a stormy sea. Having regard to the princes only, who had been the leading actors in the bloody drama, it would, perhaps, be apt to compare them to players in the old game called 'musical chairs,' with the reservation that in Central India the game came to an abrupt end before the number of chairs had been materially reduced. Indeed, in this area the only chief left chairless was the freebooter Chetu, and even for him and his diabolical Pindaris, a paternal Government was ready to provide a 'national home' had he not incontinently fled into the jungles and been eaten by a tiger. The others who had found chairs, Maharajas, Rajas, Nawabs, Rawals, Thakurs, Bhumias, potentates of high and low degree, sat tight and looked about them. The few heaved sighs of disgust, the many of relief.

Before the peace of Mundisor, which inaugurated the new régime, Central India had been ravaged to such an extent that large areas had no settled population at all. The wretched cultivators were left clustered near the big towns, where, in return for growing crops, they might hope for their bare lives. The boundaries of the 'States,' many of which then became geographically entities for the

DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN POLITICAL

first time,¹ were naturally shadowy. It was a fantastic jig-saw puzzle picture. Here sprawled a Mahratta chief, his limbs entangled with those of his erstwhile rival, here a Rajput prince held back his prancing steed. A Mohammedan queen sat in one corner gravely regarding her Hindu subjects. Of some, the severed limbs lay in a different part of the picture. As a background, the jungle, where Bhil chieftains crouched, savage as the forest *carnivora* themselves. The very *disjecta membra* of the Moghul Empire !

Decades later, under the benign supervision of the British Raj, after the Princes of India had become its sincere and staunch friends—(but before the classes in British India who have chiefly benefited had learnt to call it Satanic),—questions of boundaries began to crop up, for land was now valuable. From the nature of things, no mutual settlement of such disputes was possible, as jealousies were still so bitter that it had been found essential for peace to ordain that questions arising between the States should be referred to the arbitrament of the paramount power. In boundary disputes it was the practice for the 'Durbars' concerned to notify their occurrence to the Chief Political Officer in Central India, called the Governor-General's Agent, who sent an officer to effect a settlement on the spot ; and curiously enough, at the time I am speaking of, the early 'nineties, it was usual to depute for this responsible duty young military officers who were probationers for the Political Department. Perhaps, however, it was less curious than it seems, for in India sincerity has always availed better than cleverness, and straight methods than diplomatic finesse. Such a one, fresh from the routine of a military cantonment, suddenly found himself in a different world, a picturesque

¹ "Some we saved, others we created."—Butler Commission's Report.



old-time India of feudal pageantry, in which Rajas and Ranis, priests and ministers, men-at-arms, bards, minstrels, dancing-girls, painted elephants and dyed horses played their parts against a background of forests and castle-crowned hills. Only the scenes and sounds of war were absent.

After a long ride out from Agar on relays of ponies, I came on my first boundary settlement camp with tents spacious as bungalows, pitched by the side of a river. It was like an Indian picture of early days. There were a few troopers from my own regiment, an office staff, red *chuprassis*, all the myrmidons of official India, down to an elephant with *mahout* complete. The representatives of the rival States, termed *Motamids* ('the trusted'), who had their separate camps, started proceedings by paying official calls at which they presented their credentials, receiving at the close of the visit the *attar* (rose-water) and *pan supari* (betel-nut) of ceremony. I was lucky in having on my staff one Mohammed Sidiq (Mohammed the Sincere), designated the Mir Munshi. He was tall, spare, straight, always spotlessly turned-out in white muslin, with a sleek black head crowned with a little fluted cap, from beneath which bobbed locks curled upwards *à la Perse*. Courtly manners, a gentle voice, made up the *tout ensemble* of a very exquisite person, using the adjective in no derogatory sense. As Mir Munshi, his trade was writing, and write he did, perhaps excessively, but the most beautiful words and phrases in a perfect Persian script; and since, as he would say, God had expressly created his hands for writing, it was improper that they should ever be put to baser uses. He knew, moreover, all about ceremonial, such as this *attar* and *pan*, and was able to state with certainty which visitor was of sufficiently exalted rank to receive from me personally the *attar* and *pan*, which should have the lesser honour of receiving from his hands, or which

poor wretch was deserving of no *attar* and *pan* at all. He was likewise able to tell me beforehand if my visitor was sufficiently modernised to hold out a silk pocket-handkerchief on which, with a thing like a mustard spoon, I would put a blob of the sticky fluid, or whether he would expect me, after the old style, to anoint the palms of my hands, therewith to stroke him downwards, shoulders and arms. I am glad to think that under the guidance of Mohammed the Sincere I made no mistake in such matters.

Another important member of my staff was the surveyor, a young man from Calcutta, who, under the hottest sun, wore a flat black cap with flowers embroidered round the band and had the national Bengali liking for scarlet socks. It was his pride to turn out works of art of another sort, the maps of the disputed territory, and the boundary line fixed, and this he did in lovely colours at any rate. There were others deserving of mention, but space allows but one more. This was Qadir Baksh, orderly, from my regiment, the Central India Horse. It is giving away no secret when I say that in this famous corps, if a trooper exhibited unusual merit as a polo player or as a *shikari*, it was generally considered evidence of such mental and physical alertness as to mark him for promotion; and no bad criterion! Qadir Baksh knew all about wild beasts, and had risen to non-commissioned rank.

After arriving at the disputed boundary, the first task was a general survey of the claims in company with the *Motamids*, the local headmen and apparently every male in the country. The procession left the camp with the rising sun and wound through the country, now dark with leafless forest, like a gaily-coloured kite with a long tail. The jungles of Central India, be it said, are not of the riotous tropical kind, but sober-coloured, hills and plains, clothed for the most part with deciduous trees, *babuls* and thorns

of sorts, except in the lower-lying tracts, of no great size. But one unexpectedly found oneself looking down into deep combes, with rocky sides, veritable fairy dells, with caves and streams and pools overhung by green *jamun* trees; these the haunts of tiger, panther and bear during the heats of summer. Now and again we would come to clearings where the Bhils of the forest had taken to husbandry. It was often the case that these little bits of cultivation, where the desert was being pushed back by the sown, were the first cause of disputes that vexed great durbars. Sometimes the occasion was even more trivial, the disputed ownership of a few score of wild *mhowa* trees, whose fleshy, strong-smelling flower is for Bhils meat, and more particularly, drink.

In this, my first case, the *Motamids* were Mahratta Brahmins, a class noted for their mental, if not their bodily, slimness. Indeed, in this respect they lose nothing by comparison with any people on earth; and it was for this reason, no doubt, that men of this race and caste so often appeared as the State's representatives. Dressed in fine raiment, on their heads hats like gaily-coloured buns, they issued from their camps mounted on fat white ponies with tails dyed red. In the evening, on the return to camp, when, figuratively speaking, their tongues were hanging out, they were summoned to the durbar tent and were formally invited, now that they had seen the opposing claims, to make a settlement of the boundary line themselves. It should be explained that the instructions issued to B.S.O.'s made it clear that their work would be judged by their ability to bring about settlements of their cases by agreement or arbitration. In this event the settlement was final, but either party could appeal to the A.G.G. against a line demarcated by the B.S.O. himself. And the A.G.G., a busy man, did not like appeals. What made the matter some-

what difficult was that the *Motamids*, too, had their instructions, and these, apparently, were either to secure a line entirely favourable to the States they respectively represented, or else to force the B.S.O. himself to make an award, which could be appealed against. In this case I was delighted by both *Motamids* accepting my suggestion for a mutual settlement with the utmost affability. What charming people! They would go to their tents—this was what they really wanted—have a talk, and in the morning they would together indicate the line agreed upon and fix the sites for the boundary pillars.

We assembled at daybreak at the point where the claim lines diverged with the paraphernalia for marking the boundary, and the *Motamids* were asked to proceed together to point out the line as mutually fixed. They started off, but unfortunately each one took the line of his own claim! Begin again. We repeated the previous day's programme, this time with arguments and counter-arguments thrown in. No signs of agreement now! It was unkind, perhaps, but after a little experience in boundary settlement work, I learnt that after exhausting all efforts of diplomacy to arrange a demarcation by agreement, the next procedure was to exhaust the *Motamids* themselves. In our own country duress of a similar mild kind is, I believe, sometimes applied to obstinate jurymen. I took to walking these gentlemen up the highest hills to obtain bird's-eye views of the disputed area, sitting them down in waterless places under the mid-day sun—peculiarly repellent to the Indian intelligentsia—keeping them out on the claims from dawn till eve, and such penances, till, in the words of Jorrocks, they cried, "Cappevi." It was strenuous work!

As a matter of fact, I never succeeded in getting the *Motamids* to demarcate a boundary themselves, but after 'exploring all avenues' in the way described,



I often got my cases settled by arbitration, which, from my point of view, was equally good. Sometimes my own arbitration was agreed to, but generally it was of a more interesting kind. In one dispute it was decided that an old *patel* who lived near-by should demarcate the line by the curious ritual of killing a buffalo and walking the boundary with the raw hide over his shoulders. This he actually did, followed by myself, the *Motamids*, the surveyor and interested villagers, who, like a football crowd, had no hesitation about shouting advice to the umpire. Where the line made an angle, the old man squatted down under his skin, while, to mark the spot, a hole was dug and filled with charcoal, on which red lead was sprinkled. At the end of the ordeal he was led off, exhausted, to be carefully guarded by his relations for seven days. If anything happened to him in that time—the tradition of ‘a little bottle of poison for State occasions’ was not altogether extinct—the settlement would be void. Another time, the boundary was demarcated by a Brahmin carrying a pot of Ganges water. He was an old, old man, very thin, with the refined features often seen in India’s heaven-born; his covering a scanty loin-cloth, a scantier *paggri* and a little white moustache. A Pundit from the temple near-by brought the earthen pot of sacred water and placed it reverently on the ground. The Brahmin, shaking with nervous and religious apprehension, at this moment tried to excuse himself, but it seemed his qualms were overcome, for he bowed his head to the ground before the pot, took it up and set out. The belief underlying the ceremony was not that under the sacred oath he would demarcate the boundary fairly, but rather that his steps would actually be guided by the Power invoked. Mile after mile the Brahmin tottered along, his bony knees knocking together, but without hesitation. He completed the long journey, rather



to my surprise, and if he did not live happily ever after, he lived long enough for his line to stand.

Among the rules there was one authorising an *ex parte* decision in the event of a State representative absenting himself or misbehaving. Once only I had occasion to act on it. There were several days of marching to get to the disputed boundary, approaching which it was too evident that the country was in the throes of a bad cholera epidemic. Villages were deserted, and one came on corpses lying outside. I arrived at the camp after dusk and found it situated on low ground, the tents, for coolness, having been pitched under some big trees. Near-by ran a small river, now a succession of overhung pools. What with the heat, the closeness of the air—it was just before the rains—and, above all, the pestilence, an oppression settled on the whole camp. No one would mention the cholera, but it was in the minds of all. As Qadir Baksh, usually a cheerful soul, said, “A man behind you has but to cough to turn your heart to water!” The *Motamids* wanted me to break up the camp and go, but as it was a jungle case, in which little evidence of ownership was likely, I urged them to lay out a fair line in any way they liked, but, above all, quickly; then we could all get away. Several days passed in talk and examining the claims, but the *Motamids* seemed incapable of any sort of decision. In the meantime cases of cholera began amongst the witnesses; then in the Gwalior camp. I was sitting outside my tent one evening after dinner, wondering what on earth to do. The heat was stifling. A brilliant moon was lighting up mysteriously seemingly illimitable vistas of forest. The silence was only broken by a murmur of voices from the servants’ tents behind. A mist was rising, ghost-like, from the river; and there was a fire down there—what could that be? Then a movement of the air brought the smell of scorched flesh—it was, no doubt, a cholera corpse

they were burning. A dreadful nausea suddenly came over me, and, after bringing up my soul, I went into my tent, took an enormous dose of chlorodyne and lay down. Thoughts are disturbed at such a time—I had got the cholera—it would settle the difficulty for the *Motamids*—they would go off and leave me here. Some other problems would be settled, too! Presently the opium in the drug took effect, and I slept. Early in the morning I awoke, mentally felt myself all over and found I was very well. Pharaoh's heart was hardened. I dressed, breakfasted and sent word to the *Motamids* that they must definitely decide something, otherwise I should stay till they did. Then Qadir Baksh and I went out shooting, and before evening had three bears.

That night I was awakened by my bearer. "Look, Sahib," he said, "the Gwalior camp!" It was going up in a sheet of flame. We ran to the spot. Not a soul there! After setting light to the tents, the *Motamid* and his people had fled. A charred corpse or two were found among the ashes in the morning. During the next two days I heard and recorded feverishly all the evidence produced by the opposition *Motamid*, and in the light of that, and the original statements put in by both parties, I demarcated the boundary myself. An appeal was subsequently lodged by the defaulting State, which was accepted—not very much to my surprise.

In the course of one settlement tour I had a case near the ancient fortified city of Mandu, whose founder, it is said, possessed the magic stone called *paras*—the 'philosopher's stone.' Having made his 'pile' by the easy method of turning stone into gold, he built the city, and then, to grasp both worlds, as it were, he gave the stone to a Brahmin. The latter, in his ignorance—or wisdom—flung the stone into the Nerbudda, where it lies to this day. Only once a robber chief, having swum the river, found

DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN POLITICAL

one of his horse's hoofs shod with a golden shoe ! The city was built of massive stone blocks, on a plateau forming an abutment of the Vindhya range, and looking south from the ruined battlements I thought I had never seen so wonderful a prospect. Below opened the wide rift of the Nerbudda valley, beyond which rose the wooded Satpuras. On the hither side of the river's silver thread, a splash of scarlet swam in the haze where the *dhak* jungle was in flower. There is a pretty myth about that beautiful tree. An archer, it is said, shot at Gayatri, the Sun God, from whom a feather fluttered earthwards, and on that spot grew the first *Palasa*, or *Dhak*, which we call 'Flame of the Forest.' Mandu, the fenced city, is now desolate, and its palaces, fortifications, mosques, aqueducts, colonnades and tombs are being slowly and remorselessly levelled by the roots of the sacred pipal tree. In the early days of the nineteenth century Sir John Malcolm had to evict a tigress with cubs before he could occupy one of the deserted buildings. There were no tigers resident in Mandu when I was there, but there were wild ducks on the tank overlooked by Baz Bahadur's beautiful palace, and I prowled about the gloomy *takhhanas* looking for a panther which had been killing the goats of a Bhil, who, with his Bhilni and some young Bhils, lodged in what was once a king's abode. He was so bold a beast that he was reputed to be the wraith of some human destroyer of former days. Not finding him, I had a goat tied up near the pavilion of Rup Matti, a dancer whose fame still lives, though her fair body has been dust these three hundred years or more. From an archway above the ground, a sort of clerestory, I watched the goat swallowed up by the darkness, till imagination began to play pranks with eyesight. Near midnight the silence was suddenly broken. An abrupt movement by the goat, a rush of soft feet, a stifled cry. Then the crash of a shot thrown back

by the surrounding walls. No ! the panther was not dead—ghostly panthers are not killed that way—but the goat was, with a bullet through its head !

At Bagh, near the Nerbudda, a few miles away, was a little-known shrine in comparison with which ancient Mandu is of mushroom growth. The cavern of the Panch Pandavs has been a place of human veneration since times when the shadowy figures of Koravs and Pandavs fought one another over the breadth of India. No ornate temple is here, no richness of worship—just a vast cave in the basalt cliff, the floor deep in age-old sand. Round the sides stand the gigantic figures of the five brethren, their shoulders and heads lost in the gloom. Only after the eye has got accustomed to the twilight one may discern their features, and wonder at the skill of sculptors who worked in times so far away. The Pandavs might have been carved out of the rock as very emblems of 'Time.' For thousands of years, while kingdoms have waxed and waned, they have looked down impassively, and so they will continue long after the powers of our day have passed. It may only be hoped that the cavern's gloom will never be dispelled by electric light, the stagnant air never be disturbed by whirling fans, that no visitors from hotels on the Nerbudda front will profane the silence with jest and laughter, for when that takes place the spirits of the place will open their wings and be gone.

Though one saw little of the important chiefs on boundary duty, one met many of the smaller princelings, Thakurs and Bhumias, who usually had some sort of feudal relationship with the great rulers. They were generally good landlords and good sportsmen, and delighted to meet British officers. For some, these peaceful times were out of joint, those whose estates were too small to occupy them in administration, who were too proud to work, too poor to absent themselves or go to 'London.' A

few there were whose names were whispered in connection with dacoities. In past times, with a handful of men-at-arms, they would have been following the fortunes of their overlords for banditry on the large scale. It was one of these sheep of darker hue who descended one evening from his castle to call on the camp he had seen below. He arrived on an elephant from which hung a single deep-toned bell, over his head a big red umbrella. His minister and a few retainers walked. Elephants and ministers are expensive luxuries, but a Central India baron would rather perish of hunger—or at any rate run into debt—than do away with these emblems of greatness. The Thakur, whose handsome face indicated the *bon viveur*, was of Bhil extraction, but he wore a Rajput's small rope-like *paggri*, yellow in colour and drooped doggishly over one eye, and his beard and moustache were parted and brushed fiercely outwards after the Rajput style. A gold sword-belt, with a heavy curved sword attached, sagged down below a Falstaffian bulge. After we were seated it took no time at all to discover a subject on which he was an expert. Turn the conversation as I would, it presently came round to wine and spirits. There came a pause, and after a whispered conversation with his minister, the Thakur, eyeing me narrowly, inquired, "Has your honour any Cremly Rose?" "Cremly Rose!" I thought, my memory vainly hunting forgotten wine lists. "What on earth——?" Seeing my hesitation, the minister echoed firmly, "Yes, Sahib, Cremly Rose." The eyes of both were anxiously fixed on mine. So evident was the Thakur's anxiety, that to deny that I had Cremly Rose in my boxes would not only have been useless but cruel. "Cremly Rose," I murmured; "of course, Cremly Rose!" "The Thakur Sahib," the minister explained, "has a complaint for which Cremly Rose is useful. You will kindly send him a bottle." "I will inquire," I

said, "perhaps it may be found." "Your honour's kindness!" they exclaimed both together.

After they had departed, and the boom, boom, of the chief's bell had died away, I proceeded to prepare a bottle of 'Cremly Rose,' my recipe for which, so far as I remember, was rather more than three-quarters of a bottle of whisky filled up with claret. I had some hesitation about the latter ingredient, but it seemed indicated faintly by the 'Rose' termination. It was corked, sealed in red wax and the official seal—'*honi soit*'—and sent by the hand of a servant of the Thakur who had remained behind. When I saw the minister a few days later I took the opportunity of asking how the Thakur liked my Cremly Rose. "It was good," he replied, without much enthusiasm. Then, after a pause, "There was very little intoxication about it!"

I happened to be present near the chief's town some weeks later, on the occasion of the Dusserah festival, celebrated by the sacrificial execution of a buffalo. A great crowd had collected on an undulating grassy plain outside the town. The victim, maddened by drugs, was released, and as he went along at a clumsy gallop, bellowing, a crowd of brightly dressed horsemen drew their swords and started in pursuit, led by the chief, who had the privilege of first cut. The buffalo was soon hidden by the knot of riders, the pace getting slower as they went on. Then they came to a standstill, but in the cloud of dust one could see blades flashing, and knew the poor beast was being done to death. To understand such a scene as that, one must follow Sir James Fraser in his explorations of those obscure and tortuous alleys along which work the minds of savages.

The Nerbudda is the greatest as well as the most sacred of Central India's streams. Wandering through level plains, it opens into wide acres of shining water, in which are mirrored India's blue sky and India's

DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN POLITICAL

river scenes of villages, groves and white temples. When the river is low, yellow sandbanks emerge, on which crocodiles bask and white lines of fishing birds quiver in the mid-day haze. Elsewhere, jungle-clad hills stoop to meet the water, and the river is confined into deep green pools and runs. In such places, lying on the bank, you can see *mahseer* sunning themselves on the top of the water. In quiet spots deer and other timid jungle folk come down to drink in the evenings, and assemblies of idle *bandar log* sit on the overhanging rocks. There are otters, too, or, as an Indian writer says : " Now and then a few mermen are seen, causing the looker-on to dive into the whirlpool of astonishment ! "

This river separates two States on the north bank from the small State of Barwani on the opposite side. The exact boundary was, however, in dispute, one side maintaining that the dividing line was mid-stream, the other laying claim to the entire river and both banks. For the settlement of the case I had a camp by the river, in which a big *shamiana* tent had been erected for the hearing. At one end the B.S.O. sat with Mohammed the Sincere and a Hindu pundit ; at the sides were the opposing *Motamids* with their advisers, while the middle space was kept clear for witnesses. Here, too, were dumped the coolie-loads of records produced as evidence. There were records of revenue paid on *falij* (the melon beds cultivated on the sand-banks), records of dues on boats, fishing, ferries, and files connected with jurisdiction, criminal and civil. Even proverbs, songs and folk-lore were cited in support of one or other claim. Fortunately for me, there was a rule that no records should be admitted bearing a date prior to that historic landmark, the Treaty of Mundisor, made in 1817 by Lord Wellesley and Mulhar Rao Holkar, a necessary limitation, as before this date boundaries were impermanent as lines drawn in water. There were shoals of ' wit-

nesses,' too—old, old men from riparian villages, Bhils¹ for the most part, the swarthy, jungle-dwelling tribe of Central India. In an inquiry that lasted over many weeks, there were, of course, interludes, an account of some of which may perhaps be more interesting than the intricacies of the dispute.

There was the day, for instance, which began somewhat *andante* with the evidence of a *puggi*, and ended in quite a different *tempo*. A *puggi*, be it said, is a sleuth of the jungle, a tracker of strayed or stolen cattle, of murderers, of dacoits. He takes the measurement of a *pug* (footprint) with a bit of twine, follows the tracks to the march of his own village and there makes over his mental dossier, together with the twine, to one of his profession of the next village. It was the ancient custom of his fraternity—so he deposed—when following a line that crossed the river, always to give or take over charge on the northern bank. His cross-examination took a long time, and the heat was great. The opposing *Motamid*, a sleek Brahmin, stretched himself on his chair and yawned audibly. "To what purpose all this argument?" he remarked. "Settle the matter yourself and have done with it!" "Your remark astonishes me," I said rather ponderously; "my object is to extract the *truth*!" "Extract it, then!" he returned; and his tone conveyed his contempt for anyone hoping to capture so elusive a phantom, and ennui—it was time for his siesta. It was well, perhaps, that at this moment there came an interruption in the shape of a Bagri Bhil, who, pushed in by a *chuprassi*, threw his turban on the ground—'a petition!'

¹ The God Mahadeo, it is said, was wandering sick in the forest, when, after the manner of gods, he met a beautiful lady who cured him. The amour that followed resulted in many children, one of whom—the ugliest—afterwards killed Mahadeo's favourite bull. He was banished to the forest and became the progenitor of the Bhil tribe.

DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN POLITICAL

The story he told was that some Bhils had been walking the jungle line with their bows and arrows. They looked for hares, but moved a panther, at which one sportsman sped an arrow. The panther went off, but apparently the insult rankled, for, after going a little distance, he entered a hamlet in the forest and seized an old woman by the neck, killing her. The court immediately 'rose,' the crowd melted away to seek repose, and the late witness was sent off with Qadir Baksh to 'pug.' Some two hours later a panther, driven by the din of tom-toms out of a ravine, made off across the river's wide, boulder-covered beach. It was not the likely line for the beast to take, as the jungle lay in another direction, but so he did. I had posted myself with rifle to intercept him if he made for the forest, but, on the remote chance that he would take the line of the river, I had in readiness horse and hog spear; and so was offered the chance of a lifetime. My mount was a bay waler gelding called Horace, after the then famous 'gentleman' Hayes, from whom he had been bought. He was a horse my colonel did not like to see on parade, for Horace had an objection to standing still, and would neither walk nor trot: always on his hind-quarters, fretting and sweating. But he had a wide, kind eye, a snaffle mouth, and was sure-footed as a cat. We overtook the panther very easily, and, getting near, Horace shortened his stride and pricked his ears. Then the panther turned and came at us. A spear-point in the mouth was followed by an inefficient dig at his quarter. The round—a poor one, it must be confessed—was ended by the panther diving into a thick clump of tamarisk, where he lay growling. After all, the panther and Horace and I were all novices at this form of combat. To push Horace in after him would have been asking for trouble, and was, in fact, unnecessary, for, as I walked him round right-handed to see if an attack could be



made from the other side, there was an agitation of the bushes, and the panther came out like a streak, with short fierce roars. Horace only wanted an easing of the reins to bound forward, and as I lowered the spear-point the beast impaled himself upon it. He twisted round and bit and splintered the spear shaft, but it was a last effort, and over his foe a very brave little horse arched his neck and snorted. A very slight swerve on his part would have given the panther the best of it.

While awaiting some documents, I took a little shooting tent to a valley below a hill called Deogarh, in the Satpura range. My hope was to shoot a bison. Memories of nights spent in the jungle are ineffaceable. How solemnly stand the trees around as you lie looking up at the stars. What delicious coolness in the air after the heat and glare of the day. How still the night! Suddenly, from close by, an uneasy peacock calls. Another answers, more join in, and more, till the air is full of their strident screams. A climax is reached, and the clamour as quickly dies down, till once more there is utter silence. You wait expectant, and if you do not drop asleep some message will certainly reach you. A panther's deep rasping roars, the long-drawn mating-call of a tiger—he must be the other side of the hill—the bell of a *sambur*. The pattering of feet quite close makes your flesh creep. Always the thrill of suspense and the unknown. Is it not night, 'wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth'?

It was still dark when two trackers and I climbed the hill to meet the rising moon. We breakfasted by a pool, the margins of which held records of visits of bison and tiger and many a lesser beast, and shortly after came on the big tracks of a solitary bull. We followed them far, by hills and valleys. The jungle consisted of a shrub with dry, crackling leaves, which made a noise as we pushed through,

and from which a pungent powder filled eyes and nose. At the edge of a ravine there was a crash of a heavy beast, which thundered away unseen. Next time we came on him I saw something, but not enough for a shot. Three times for luck, I hoped. But thus it happened again. What to do? The jungle was too dry for still-hunting, that was clear—at any rate, when there was a booted European in the hunt. The Bhils consulted. Then one was left to follow the bison's tracks, the other took me a long, long round. We came to a part where the trees were bigger and more scattered, and here crossed a shallow ravine some hundred yards wide, on the farther edge of which the tracker halted. This, he said, was the bison's *nakha*, his 'point,' an astonishing and almost incredible statement. A *shikari* may make a shrewd guess at a line a tiger may take in a drive, with stops—but a bison!—and the whole wide jungle open! The Bhil climbed a tree; I sat down under it, tired and despondent. The forest was quiet, as if exhausted by the day's heat. In the air hung the faint aromatic scents of Central India woodland brought out by a burning sun. In short, I went to sleep with my rifle across my knees, and even dreamt. A whispered "Sahib," a clatter of stones, and I opened my eyes to see a dark form coming down the opposite slope of the nulla—the bison! At the bottom he stops and turns round, half hidden. Shoot, or wait? He stands motionless for moments that seem an age. Sitting there, as I hold my rifle to my shoulder in case he should break back, I listen in the stillness to my heart going thump, thump, thump. Then he wheels round abruptly and comes up the hill at a trot straight towards me, as if drawn by a magnet. He is hidden for a moment in a fold of the ground; then a great horned head rises up not five yards from me, and as I fire he stumbles to the ground,



his legs in the air. My bullet had struck him just below the left horn. It was the solitary bull right enough, but to this day I wonder whether for that bison I had to thank a Bhil's jungle-craft, luck, or magic !

Another red-letter day was notable in a different way. Scene, an open level glade in the forest, a few scattered trees. I was up one ; on another, some thirty yards to my left, was perched a Babu, a word which, according to the authorities, is a 'term of respect,' or may signify 'a native clerk who writes English.' Here I use the word in both senses. It was a tiger beat, and he had come out to see the fun. The noise of the distant beaters, commanded by Qadir Baksh, had scarcely begun when a tap, tap, from an unseen stop to my right told me something was on the move. On to this stage, a minute later, a great tiger entered from the right and walked slowly and silently across. In his magnificence and beauty there was something almost incredible about him—as if one were to see a life-sized and perfect tiger on the quiet green sward of an English park. As he was approaching the tree to my left, I fired, and with a staccato *ough* that might have been heard a mile away, the tiger made a bound at the tree on which the clerk was sitting. I afterwards measured with my rifle the height of the claw-marks from the ground—some fifteen feet. The Babu's bare extremities were, perhaps, a foot or two higher. The scene is imprinted on my memory, The tiger's dying spring ; still more its effect on the poor Babu. But this may only be told in a footnote¹ in decent Latin. Insult added to injury indeed !

For other diversions there were the crocodiles of the Nerbudda. On the far bank, nearly opposite my camp, a little town stood. There was a burning

¹ Summo pavore conturbatus impotens vesicæ liquorem in os belluæ soevientis demisit.

DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN POLITICAL

ghat, and sometimes I saw a half-burnt corpse flung into the sacred stream, and the water swirl with, may I say, an ingurgitation¹ of crocodiles? One could see their jaws snapping above the water, when engaged, as I supposed, on an unusually tough morsel. I had a personal grudge against these creatures by reason of their having similarly treated some very nice inflatable rubber decoy ducks which I had put down in a bay near my camp, and when interest in shooting them had waned, I tried a method described in that classic, the 'Rod in India.' I got a long bamboo with the diameter of a light tent pole, to one end of which a large treble hook was fastened by a couple of feet of unravelled cord. To the hook was attached a fowl in a way that, I hoped, caused the bird no inconvenience. The apparatus was laid on a sandy beach near the water's edge, and a little paddling skiff, in which was a hog spear, was moored conveniently close. Qadir Baksh and I lay concealed on a high bank and awaited developments. We awaited them a long time. Then Qadir Baksh touched me. A lump on the surface of the water was gliding slowly our way—the wart a crocodile wears on the end of his nose. It became stationary just opposite the fowl. Half an hour later we were wondering if it was really a crocodile or a half-submerged boulder. In three-quarters of an hour we were sure it was a boulder. Then the fowl flapped its wings. Like a flash, a very large crocodile was out of the water, had taken the bait and was away with the agility of a lizard. The bamboo, its end upright in the water like a periscope, was moving down-stream. If I, sitting a few minutes later in the bows of the skiff with the spear,

¹ The word in this connection may strike the reader as unusual, but if you have a 'paddling' of wild duck, a 'pride' of lions, a 'murmuration' of starlings, and so on, it seems only right that there should be some word appropriate for a collection of crocodiles. For a number of them sleeping on a sand-bank, of course, a different word would have to be sought for. I leave it to the reader.

had some vague fears as to what might happen if the big reptile should upset our little boat 'with one blow of his powerful tail,' they had to be suppressed, for Qadir Baksh, in the ardour of pursuit, was behind me wielding the paddle for all he was worth. We slowly overhauled the crocodile, and presently I was able to peer down into the deep clear water and see him, a dark shadow, swimming below. I poised my spear to lunge and—up came the bait, fowl, hook and all! My fish was gone! I tried Thomas's method several times, but the end was always the same. At the critical moment the bait was neatly and completely returned to me—regurgitated, in fact. Perhaps the hook was the wrong shape. However, it is better to travel hopefully than to arrive, and the thrill of the pursuit was beyond price.

As the heat grew greater, I used to take evening swims in the river, escorted by a splashing boat on each side of me, which exercise brought on such a bad attack of malaria that I struck the camp on the river-bank and took up my quarters in an empty house belonging to the Rawal on the outskirts of the town, where I finished the Nerbudda case. My most poignant recollections of this temporary abode are connected with nights, when lying with a high temperature, half asleep and half awake, I was maddened by a wandering voice crying up and down the streets of the town. It repeated, in a melancholy and damnable monotone, one single sentence, but the words I could not distinguish. The Rawal of Barwani had in his employ a Bengali, whose duties were to instruct his little boy in 'English.' I had a liking for the Babu, and he used to come to see me. One day I asked him about this sleep-destroying nuisance. "Sir," he said, deprecatingly, "of course, he is religious mendicant." "Oh, and what does the religious mendicant say?" "He is saying, 'Will anybody give me a pony, will anybody

give me a pony? ” “ Very nice, indeed,” I said ;
“ and does he expect to get a pony in this way ? ”
“ Yes, Sahib, of course. Once upon a time somebody
will give him pony.” Great heavens ! One feverish
night I remember having an argument with myself
about that medicant—something like this :—

A.—“ There is that d——d brute again ! He
ought to be thrown into the Nerbudda. What a
country ! ”

B.—“ Intolerance ! You have much the same
thing in England.”

A.—“ In England ! You just try walking up and
down Piccadilly at night calling out for ponies and
see what happens ! ”

B.—“ Methods differ, that’s all.”

A.—“ What do you mean ? ”

B.—“ In England his wants would be advertised
—probably in the ‘ Times.’ You often see them—
‘ Clergyman in reduced circumstances, having been
ordered equestrian exercise, hopes that some charit-
ably disposed person, &c.’ ”

I forget how the discussion ended. Anyhow, the
clergyman in reduced circumstances continued his
nocturnal rounds till I concluded the river boundary
settlement and left.

In case any reader may be interested to hear my
award in the Nerbudda boundary dispute, I may
add shortly that though the State claiming both
banks produced a surprising amount of evidence, I
did not think it sufficient to justify a decision which
would have been so provocative of further disputes.
My award was for the mid-stream line. It was, of
course, appealed against.



V.

SPORT IN THE HIMALAYAS.

THE glamour of big-game shooting has in these days rather paled, and not altogether without cause. Speaking somewhat loosely, it has become too easy and too safe. Cars take you in comfort into the wildernesses of Africa in as many hours as in old times it took strenuous days. Beasts are even shot from cars by people who hanker after easily won reputations. Weapons have improved, perhaps to the point of unfairness. Criticisms of this kind are reasonable in so far as they are applicable. Less reasonable are the arguments of people who condemn all shooting on humanitarian grounds. They forget that as eaters of meat themselves, they are indulging an instinct that is quite as primitive and quite as unnecessary as that of hunting.

There is at any rate one form of big-game shooting to which no exception can be taken on the grounds that it is too easy or too safe, one country at any rate where no car can bring you up within reach of your quarry. Picture yourself sitting on a little grassy plateau that might be on the very edge of the world. You can look down into immense depths, pastures and rocks and precipices descending into a haze of heat, whence rises the muffled thunder of a great river. By a clump of cedars on what might be a little lawn is a white dot. That is the tent you slept in last night and whither you will presently return. Looking upwards you see walls of rock

ending in long slopes of snow-covered roofs, buttresses, towers, pinnacles, like some titanic cathedral. Higher up still, far beyond the limits of vegetation, glittering peaks soar among the clouds—"mountains of such height that the sense of sight has to rest at several places before it reaches the summit!" With you is a native *shikari*, active, lissome, with eyes like a hawk, a mountaineer born and bred. You and he are scanning with glasses the mountain opposite. Ah, his keen eyes have spotted something. The long telescope is propped up on some stones, and in the small circle of view, very high up, you see a rock wall and below it a grassy ledge. On this some animals, looking absurdly small, are moving. It is a little herd of *markhor*, the giant wild goat of the Himalayas. There are two old bucks amongst them, recognisable by their long grey beards and their huge spiral horns, like the gnarled branches of trees. Up there they seem extraordinarily remote and inaccessible. That is your job for to-morrow, not to-day; for it is a good three hours' climb to get near them, some difficult ground lies between, and the shadows are already filling up the depths.

And what of the next day's stalk? There are chances against you. The eyes of Himalayan game animals are so sharp that you must never for one instant show yourself. During the stalk a head may slowly and cautiously be raised over a rock to see through the glasses if the beasts have moved, and that is all. Their powers of smell are such that the wind brings them notice of danger from almost incredible distances. On a still day, when the sun gets hot on a mountain-side, the air flows upwards; but, speaking generally, early in the morning and at even there is a downward current. You must 'guard your scent.' There are difficulties of ground: precipitous cliffs where steady nerves are wanted, chimneys and gullies down which stones come



hurtling, steep slopes of frozen snow in which steps must be cut. However, you arrive—somewhere above the herd. You crawl carefully forward to look down the precipice, rifle in hand. They should be on the ledge below you. This is the culmination, it may be of many days' hard work. They may have gone; some mysterious message may have given them warning. How about that dislodged stone that went crashing down? That covey of snowcock half-way up that went shooting across the valley uttering their alarm cry—tip-tip-tip, tirrhi? But supposing they are there, unconscious of danger, moving about the rocks. Sometimes you see one, sometimes another—you have to find the monster, the one you marked whose horns make three complete twists. Where is he? There must be a beast behind that juniper—you can see the branches strangely agitated. Now a great horn is visible. There, he is out, on a level bit, will not fall—Take him! Even at this moment catastrophe is possible. An eye may spot you, a puff of air the wrong way and all may be gone and you will know no more of them. There is a distant echo of falling stones, and that is all. You may miss! On the other hand, with good fortune—the *shikari* would say, "If God wills"—you may presently see him measuring with his fingers a pair of massive horns, and perhaps hear him murmur, "Six spans," say, fifty inches, or a bit more.

In the Western Himalaya, besides other beasts—antelope, deer, gazelle, yak, two kinds of bears, leopards and smaller animals—there are four distinct species of wild sheep and three of the wild goats, all inhabiting different kinds of ground at rather different elevations. Speaking generally, the sheep are found on mountains of rounded outlines—downs, as it were—on a vast Himalayan scale. The difficulty is to get near them, and as most kinds are found at altitudes from 10,000 to 18,000 feet, the

toil is severe. The goats, on the other hand, ibex, *tahr* and *markhor*, find a refuge in precipices, and in this respect *markhor* are the most acrobatic. It is marvellous to see a herd of these heavy beasts moving across the face of a precipice that must, one supposes, have footholds, but which looks like a wall! To see them on the imitation precipice of a Mappin terrace is pathetic. They are subject to the same laws of gravitation as other creatures. How do they do it? First, I suppose, one must consider their complete freedom from human misgivings, self-questionings, nerves. Born and bred among precipices. Secondly, the wonderful construction of their feet. Below the shell of the cloven hoof, taking the place of a horse's frog, there is a rough rubber-like cushion that must give an almost fly-like grip of the ground's surface. Mankind, since his forbears of thousands (or millions?) of years ago began to cover their feet, has been constrained to devise different kinds of footgear for different kinds of ground. Before going stalking, if I were asked to choose my footgear, I should first make inquiries. Dry rock in an arid land? Nothing to beat the Persian *giva*, with soles of cotton hardened by a special process. Rocks dry or wet? The Dardistan *taoti*—a raw hide bound to the foot and half up the leg by thongs—gives wonderful confidence, and has the advantage of being self-renewing, for as the foot part wears, more is taken in from the surplus round the leg. Soft snow? There is nothing better than the Kashmiri sandal of rice-straw worn over thick woollen *puttoo*; or else the moccasins of the country, called in different localities *pabboo* or *churak*. For easy climbing and scrambling the Pathan or Kashmiri nailed sandal (*chapli*) is good; while for ice and all sorts of conditions no better footgear has yet been invented than the Alpinist's nailed and well-greased boot. To the *markhor*, how-

ever, nature has given a chaussure perfect for all ground and all weathers.

I am reminded of a little incident that gave our small party of Politicals and soldiers in the frontier post of Gilgit a laugh. We were doing some rifle practice outside the fort. As we were finishing, someone espied our chief high up a precipitous hill that overhung. He had been out shooting, and was coming towards us. He was a noted cragsman, who had won the V.C. for leading a daring climb in the assault on Nilt, and he was running down best pace. 'X,' who had some reputation as a madman, suddenly put up his rifle and fired a shot which threw up a spurt of dust some twenty yards from the chief. A most reprehensible action, indeed unpardonable; but 'X' was a good shot, and sent his bullet wide enough not to be dangerous. The chief arrived naturally furious. "Who was it fired that shot? I insist on knowing." 'X.' saluted. "I am afraid I did, sir." "You did? You did! And what the ——?" "I am awfully sorry, Major," said 'X.,' "but you did look so exceedingly like a *markhor* coming down that hillside I simply *could* not resist having a shot at you!"

It is well, as I hinted, to shoot your beast where he will not fall far. Otherwise you may see a shot animal begin slipping. There he goes down a snowy slope, taking a small avalanche with him, faster and faster towards a precipice. Old Gul Sher, my *shikari*, seeing his hard-won meat disappearing, used to call at the top of his voice, *Khuda Yar—Khuda Yar* (God befriend!). But no, the beast falls, strikes a rock and goes spinning head over heels into the gulf below. I have a reason to remember Gul Sher's shout of *Khuda Yar*, having once myself been the subject of his prayers. I was walking carefully behind him on a steep slope covered with half-frozen snow when my feet went from under me, and down

I went. There was a drop below, and as I went towards it faster and faster I heard Gul Sher's voice above me singing out his *Khuda Yar*; and in the funny way one's mind works at such times, I thought it queer that he was calling out in exactly the same way that he did for a doomed *markhor*! There came a sudden dislocating bump, and I was hung up on the friendly trunk of a shattered juniper tree.

Gul Sher, the *shikari*, was a wonderful man on the hillside, with a cat-like lightness of foot, balance and nerve that I have seen equalled in no other Asiatic Highlander, though in these respects they are all wonderful. Once, however, it was for me to repeat his prayer of *Khuda Yar*, but through no mistake of his sure feet. It was on the Pamirs, the 'Roof of the World,' dreary uplands where the lowest valley elevations are higher than Mont Blanc and the mountain crests rise up to heights of 20,000 feet and more. Here the mountains are not very precipitous, for the snow does not melt fast enough to carve out the terrific chasms and gorges one finds farther south. Mountains and valleys alike were deep in snow. I had wounded an *ovis poli*, the big sheep that bears the name of the medieval traveller, Marco Polo. We followed the tracks to the top of a high ridge, and there found he had gone down again. Gul Sher and I were descending a steep gully in which the snow was hard enough to make steps necessary. The sun was hot with a blinding glare and the snow seemed shaky. We were working our way slowly and carefully down, and Gul Sher had got some way in front, when an avalanche with a swish and dull roar shot out of a gully that joined ours just below me. It missed me by a few feet, and the snow broke away from in front of me, and many hundreds of tons went rushing down on the *shikari*. He made a desperate effort to get out of the course of the avalanche but failed, and was immediately lost to view. I made my way down



with trembling knees. Reaching a ridge, from which one could see far down, I sat down and pulled out my glasses. At the bottom of the valley the avalanche had spread out into a fan, and there was something there in the snow that might be the figure of a man. Then I breathed inwardly *Khudar Yar!* When I got down I found Gul Sher sitting up in the snow dazed, but none the worse for his astonishing descent with the avalanche! As soon as he could get on his feet, he, a Muslim, stood up and returned his thanks to God.

In this Himalayan stalking one carries no Alpine rope or appliances, for one is not out to find dangerous ground. The difficult places one does come across are incidental, to be avoided when possible, not an object in themselves. In many years' work and sport in the Himalayas, the place I look back on with the most unpleasant sensations was one which it would have required a journey of 150 miles or more to avoid. I was returning from Chinese Turkestan, through the gorges that lie between the Mintaka Pass and the little mountain principality of Hunza. Our route lay down a river-bed between immensely high cliffs that shut out the snows above. It was the season when the stream was a raging torrent of melted snow and glacier water. At a point where it impinged on a rock wall and was unfordable, a tiny track, used on rare occasions by men on foot, led up a narrow gully to our right. Where a rock barred the way the trunk of a willow tree cut with notches, up which one could climb, had been wedged. After climbing up for half an hour or more, the track turned left out of the gully, and then I saw what I was in for. Only a few inches wide it ran straight across the cliff face, which was not very far off the perpendicular. There was a little space at the corner, where two or three of my Kanjuti porters were sitting down. "Take them off," they said, pointing to my nailed Kashmiri sandals. "You will

slip." They had all taken their footgear off. But I was not used to going barefoot. The track was such as might have been made by ibex, very narrow, perhaps six or eight inches, with a slight slope outwards. By stretching out a hand to your right you could touch the cliff. On your left—well, it was best not to look to the left. The sound that came up from the river far below was enough. If we had had a rope it would have been useless, for if anyone fell he would have taken others with him. The alternative to this horrid traverse was to trek back to the Mintaka Pass and take the alternative route by the Killik Pass. So, doing my best neither to hurry nor falter, I followed my barefoot guide, who walked this track with a drop of 1000 feet below him with as much assurance as if it had been ten. In such a place the tendency of a person who has *very* bad nerves seems to be to turn inwards to the wall and spread out both arms, at least I have seen a person behave this way on quite a broad rock gallery, where there was hardly a possibility of falling. If less nervy, the tendency is to lean inwards as you go. This also has to be resisted. Some sort of a hand-hold inspires confidence, a legacy, I suppose, from distant ancestry. There was nothing of that sort here. When I got to the end of the traverse, some eighty yards that seemed like a mile, I was trembling and glad to sit down. I had been in more difficult places, but none that inspired more desperate fear. As a matter of fact, the only Englishman I have known killed by falling when out shooting was on ground that was not terrifying but treacherous. He put his foot on a boulder, projecting from a rotten cliff, which had previously taken the weight of his *shikari*, and it gave way. He fell about 100 feet.

Anyone proposing to shoot in the valleys of the right bank of the Indus below Bunji may have the exciting experience of crossing this mighty river by raft or, at certain seasons, of travelling down it.

Imagine a deep backwater in the shelter of smooth black rocks, beyond, the river rushing by with a thunder that might be that of a barrage put up by an army deep underground. Whether due to the echo from the mountains, or, as some say, to great boulders being rolled along its bed, the voice of the Indus has here a note deeper even than that of the sea. It is indeed an impressive sight, these great waters "hastening from the high places of the earth to its ancient reservoir!" In the water below you lies a raft of boughs, tied together by ropes of twisted goats' hair and attached to the grotesque and swollen forms of bullocks, headless and legless, now being inflated from the leather lungs of half-naked men. The breath of the Indus comes cold and damp, with a faint and indescribable smell. Now and again a surge from the river fills up the backwater, so that the raft which was twenty feet below you is brought up to the level of your feet. You seat yourself in the centre, and are adjured to take a firm handhold. The two rowers wait on their oars for the right moment in the water's rise and fall, and then, with a shout, *Allah ho Akbar*, they plunge them in the water; and as the frail craft is caught in the river's grip, the banks begin to slip swiftly by. But your eyes are on some broken water ahead, which comes nearer with relentless rapidity. The raft begins to strain and twist, and next moment you are among the rapids. You are aware that you are wet to the skin, and get the strange impression that the raft, though tossed about wildly, is now stationary in the midst of a turmoil of waterfalls and leaping, spouting waves. In the din you are conscious of the rowers shouting encouragement to each other, prayers. And how their miserable oars are bending! What can the strength of poor humans do in the grip of forces so tremendous! How much longer can this wretched contorted craft exist! Then suddenly you are among smooth glassy waves; the roaring broken



DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN POLITICAL

water is behind, receding rapidly. You can now find time to take a look at the distant moving banks. The raft is not yet half across, and more rapids below !

I seem to have said much about the forbidding aspects of this country and very little about its wonderful fascination and charm. If I had done exactly the opposite, the picture would have been truer. The 'value' of a sport, however, depends largely on its difficulty, and I wanted to show that shooting in the Himalayas is not without this kind of value. There may be greater sports in the India of my affections. Pig-sticking perhaps? Mountaineering? If I had my years in the Himalayas again, I think I should at any rate endeavour to be an Alpinist. Mountaineering is of all sports the purest, the least tinged with any base or unworthy motive. It is team work—in *excelsis*. The strength, skill and endurance of those who would attack these terrific peaks are pitted against an implacable adversary. Behind his main defences, the difficulty of his icy fortifications, the cold, the rarity of the air, he has weapons in reserve, storms, avalanches, barrages of rocks and ice. To make good in this sport, not only a frame of first-rate quality is wanted, but a spirit to match. In the Himalayas are countless virgin peaks, unclimbed and unclimbable. No mountaineering Alexander will ever sigh that he has no more worlds left to conquer !

I suppose few of my readers will have the opportunity of visiting this marvellous playground, but that matters little. In this changing world, from many quarters and in ever-new forms, the spirit of adventure still beckons to the youth of the world, and where she beckons the elect will surely follow.

VI.

NARNAISHAI—A MEMORY.

ONE August morning Gul Sher and I left our camp, pitched amid the flowers of a lofty Himalayan Alp, to spy some ground to the south, on the far side of the Harpai Pass. The day had broken with fog and a drizzle that beat cold in our faces as we followed the winding goat-track upwards. The pass was a desolate enough spot above the line of vegetation, with old snow lying in the hollows. A cairn stood on one side of the track. This left behind, we crossed some acres of gigantic boulders, beyond which the path ran gently down into the region of grass and trees, first a few scattered junipers, standing ghost-like in the mist, then clumps of *excelsa*; and soon we were again in the Alpine region of deodars, silver birches, cascades and grassy lawns. Some seven or eight miles from the top of the pass, the goat-track, abandoning its easy gradient, plunges abruptly downwards through forests and gorges, by rock ladders and galleries, to reach the little outpost of Chilas on the Indus far below. Here, before the steep descent begins, is a *shal* or sheepfold (at that time unoccupied), called by the beautiful name of Narnaishai. It consists of a circular wall of boulders, in which the flock crowd and huddle at night, and a rude shelter for the shepherd. This was to be our inn for a couple of nights.

Passing through the *shal* and keeping on the same level, we came after half an hour's scramble to a

ledge, whence, on a better day, as Gul Sher told me, one could look down over an enormous extent of likely ground. Here with our backs against a rock we sat down and decided to wait and hope for a change. The drizzle had stopped, but there was no movement in the air, and the mist enveloped us, so that though I knew there was empty space beneath and before me, I had the impression of being shut in by blank grey walls. The air was very still. Once or twice we heard the rattle of a falling stone, indicating some animal moving below us, and from time to time was repeated a long mournful note, as if a spirit of the mist were calling—the whistle of a snowcock. As the afternoon wore on there came a change. The mist whitened and began to move and shudder as if from the pushes of a far-off wind; in it caves opened and closed again, then reopened in purple gulfs revealing immense depths. Slowly the vapours drew themselves into a line of cloud above us, below which were deeps of crystal clarity. We seemed perched on the castle of a titanic fortress, from which one could look down on massive grey battlemented walls, with towers on rock escarpments, the whole overgrown and crumbling to decay. Below this again a chaos of precipices and ridges took the eye down to the bottom of the abyss, where between barren cliffs, in a red haze of heat or dust, the Indus could be seen, a narrow winding thread, so far off that one listened in vain for the sound of its mighty voice. On the far side of this stupendous rift, a dark wall of mountain rose into the level line of cloud.

Eighty-seven years ago a shoulder from the mountain opposite fell across the Indus, damming it for many months. It is hard even for those who have seen that tremendous river in its course through the Himalayas and heard the thunder of its rapids to imagine the scale of that earthslide—the roar of the falling mountain, the valley full of dust, the



succeeding silence, month by month the ever lengthening, ever deepening lake, and then, a sea of yellow leaping waves carrying destruction down the valley even to the far-off Punjab, where a Sikh army encamped in its bed was swept away. "As a woman with a wet towel," said a native account, "sweeps away a legion of ants, so the river blotted out the army of the Raja."

I was spying the ground below when an exclamation from my companion made me put down the glasses to look upwards and behold a vision incomparable, unforgettable. To our left front, soaring above the sea of clouds, at a height that seemed incredible, the summit of immaculate Nanga Parbat, dazzling white in full sunlight. As I looked, the clouds that concealed the greater part of the mountain rent and melted up into thin vapours hanging in mid-space; so that in one glance the eye could travel from the topmost peak, by snow fields, glaciers, glittering pinnacles and black ridges to the river far below. Figures, whether of time or space, represent little to the mind, but here one could see a mountain-side almost sheer of 23,000 feet. Nanga Parbat will surely remain unconquered long after Everest has fallen! As I scanned its great west face through the glass, a tiny cloud started from below a hanging glacier and moved slowly downwards till lost to view. I waited for the sound of the avalanche, and it came at last, a low reverberation like distant thunder.

The sun began to sink behind the dark mountains of Tangir, far away to the right where the Indus valley lost itself. A scarf of cloud half-veiled his face, from behind which broad rays shot a fan of light across the sky; while the bank of clouds over a wide horizon between the setting sun and the giant peak had become lines of golden waves breaking over an illimitable sea. It seemed as if heaven and earth had conspired together to display to us

DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN POLITICAL

of all mortals the extent of their glory. The climax of splendour passed ; but the pageant moved forward with the power and emotion of a vast musical scheme. As the sun disappeared, the gold left the clouds now suffused with colour : carmine, amber and purple. Over all hung the hush and sadness of departing day. From far below a partridge called. The *shikari* stood for his evening prayer.

And now the sky was nearly clear, and of that turquoise blue that has in it a trace of green, an infinitely calm sea on which floated long cloud islands, dove-coloured and violet, evening's tenderest hues. Slowly purple shadows spread over the mountains ; one by one the colours faded from the sky. But after the evening star was lit and the great void at our feet had become gloomy and bottomless, a red glow still remained on the summit of Nanga Parbat. Then that light, too, flickered and was gone, and all became dark and very cold.

VII.

LEH.

BEFORE me lies a map of part of the Western Himalaya, from corner to corner dark with *hachured* mountain shading. Here and there little green streaks in rows, like truncated worms, are glaciers. One of them has lately pushed its snout across a thin blue line representing a river. It has happened before; deep lakes have formed and in course of time have drained away—sometimes suddenly; but for the first time in history such behaviour has been a matter of interest in the far-off Western world. A red line winding across the map in a direction roughly easterly is the 'Central Asian Trade road,' a rocky ten-foot track, climbing passes, plunging into gorges, creeping along the face of precipices, struggling across glaciers: a true arterial road, to use the modern expression, but one where yaks take the place of lorries and mules of motors. In some places it is white with their bones.

A few miles from where the road crosses the sinuous blue line marked 'Indus' the word 'Leh' catches the eye, the big block letters arousing a momentary wonder how a city meriting such important type came to be cradled in this lofty wilderness. Leh is, however, a capital, once of an independent country, now of the Kashmir province of Ladak, a name which straggles across the map as the exigencies of mountain shading permit. Though the country to the north and south on the map

DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN POLITICAL

looks similar, a traveller from Kashmir, after crossing the pass called Zogi La, finds himself amid scenery curiously unlike the alpine valleys through which he has been journeying. He wonders at its barrenness, the vast scale of its heaving earth-waves. If he should inquire about this desolation, he will surely be given no disquisition on the effect of mountain ranges on monsoon currents, but he may perhaps hear the story of Duzhi-Lamo. Long ago, this lady, who was Goddess of Seasons, was accompanying her husband to Ladak, but at the top of the Zogi he made to leave her behind 'on account of her Kashmiri smell.' The slighted goddess then turned her face to Kashmir and her back to Ladak. As an effect, I suppose, of the height and the thinness and dryness of the air—not to mention the averted looks of the goddess—the tone of a Ladaki landscape is that of some tinted engraving when old and faded; the browns and reds and ochres of the mountains, the green of the barley, even the blue sky, exhibit the half-tints peculiar to deserts. Here, if one looks at a mountain-side against the sun, one misses something: the impenetrable haze that, in Scotland, is at once the delight of artists and the despair of deer-stalkers.

Though the face of nature is forbidding, no one who has travelled in Ladak but has a good word to say for the people; for who does not like kindly smiling faces, even if the owners be small and ugly, wear pigtailed and have never seen a bath? Their one vice, if it merits so harsh a name, is a fondness for barley beer, a beverage that demands the most determined drinking to ensure a mild intoxication and a temporary forgetfulness—which no one would begrudge them—of their hard surroundings. Then they dance—and very appropriately to their appearance. The poorness of the land may be judged from the fact that though a fraction of unity would represent the density of the population per square

mile, yet the monastic system and the strange custom called polyandry are necessary precautions against an excessive birth-rate. There is a saying—more like a sigh—among the poor of Chitral :—

‘ *Asman zhang : zamin dhang.*’

‘ Heaven is high : the earth hard.’

And it is no less applicable in Ladak.

The land bears witness to the Lamaistic faith in monasteries and temples, in sculptures and rock engravings, in queer-shaped *stupas* and in vast heaps of inscribed stones. The town of Leh itself, the half-way emporium between Srinagar and Yarkand, has a more secular atmosphere. In the busy season its far-famed caravanserais are thronged with traders from all the ‘seven climes,’ and piled with boxes and bales, the merchandise of the East : silks and wool and furs, musk, turquoises, corals and gold-dust, besides the more prosaic wares of India and the West. The writer was once asked—in a whisper—if he could supply to a trader even the smallest quantity of *momiai*, that rare drug which, as everyone knows, is distilled by the English from the brains of black boys suspended over a fire. Famous, too, are the bazaars of Leh and the broad main street, given up on festival days to the polo players. But the feature dominating all is the palace of the old Ladaki kings, on a rock escarpment overhanging the town, the slope of its whitish-grey walls against the sky adding to the effect of height.

One might suppose that the annals of this little-known town, hidden away far from the world’s turmoil, must have been uneventful ; that Ladak must always have been, as a local writer describes it, ‘a land of high mountains and pure works.’ But the pages of its history, lately discovered and translated by the good Moravian missionaries who work here, are, in fact, no fairer than those of other

Eastern countries. Before the religion of Buddha came to blend with, and to some extent humanise, the old beliefs, Ladak was a country of devil-worship and cannibalism. One reads how it was the practice in the ancient civilisations of Ur for kings, after death, to be accompanied to the other world by a full retinue. Here, too, when the bodies of Ladaki rulers were buried, potted up in gold-dust, 'several tens of Great Ministers' kept them company. Up these valleys surged the human tides associated with such names as Chengiz, Halaku and Timur Lang. In later times Ladak, as a land of the uncircumcised, was beset by Muslim foes. A Mohammedan writer tells of the invasion of the country by the Moghuls of Kashgar; how 'the talons of Islam seized the hands of infidelity'; how 'the enemy fled, while the Mussulmans gave chase, so that not one of these bewildered people escaped'; how Burkapa was slain, together with all his men, and how 'their heads formed a lofty minaret, so that the vapour from the brains of the infidels of that country reached to the heavens.' Till comparatively recent years the Muslim border princelings also liked to reckon themselves God's scourges, so that, among these mountains, fighting, relentless as battles among wolves, was frequent. Peace, indeed, only came to Ladak with the British supremacy in Northern India.

Pride of lineage seems to be characteristic of Highland chieftains in both hemispheres. I recall the young Thum of Nagar who claimed as an ancestor his namesake, *Sikandar Azam* (Alexander the Great), called in Asia the 'Two-horned'; and, indeed, when one looked at his classical and perfect features and recollected that the great Macedonian did lead his armies through the mazes of the Hindu Kush, one felt that the story was at least credible. The Chief of Khapalu, a hereditary foe of Ladak, had similar pretensions, but the local bards somewhat

marred the verisimilitude of the claim by prefixing, as the immediate forerunners of Alexander, the names of the Biblical patriarchs, Abraham and Isaac! The descent of the Buddhist kings of Ladak is of another kind, for it is traced back to dim times when baby princes sprang, like buds, from swellings on their mothers' bodies. Was not Prince Gautama himself born thus? While smiling at the fairy-tale in a superior way, one may, perhaps, pause to remember that the germs from which mankind and all living creatures have sprung did, in fact, reproduce in this very way—to use the biologist's expression, 'by fission.'

The present Gyalpo, now a pensioner of the Kashmir State, no longer lives in the ancestral palace overlooking the town, and one may wander freely through its deserted halls and apartments, narrow staircases and dungeons. When darkness falls and the bazaars below twinkle with lights, fancy pictures a queer assortment of royal ghosts emerging with the bats and owls to re-enact life's pageant: the pious who endowed monasteries; the profligate who took to themselves *Bhemos*; the benignant, the bloodthirsty. Some, too, who in life strayed from the worn paths of normality. There was Hjam-dbyans-rnam-rgyal, for instance, about whom history makes the curt statement that he 'equalised rich and poor three times.' In spite of his perseverance, it seems that rich and poor must somehow have become unequal again, for, at a later date, there came a king, with an equally striking name, of whose mind, we are told, the devil took possession, 'for he regarded the riches of men.' Those that did not squeeze readily were 'sealed up and put aside.' Certain outrageous habits seem to have afforded further proof of this ruler's bedevilment: "In the morning, when washing his hands, he required twelve buckets full of hot and cold water mixed to wash his hands. The regulation was

established lasting from the first to the last supply of water ; in this way he washed his hands." Behaviour such as this was unprecedented.

No European traveller visited Leh before the eighteenth century, and, as usual, the first to come was a Jesuit Father, Desideri. A hundred years later came Moorcroft, a name that conjures up the romance of Eastern adventure when it was adventure indeed. About him there exists a mystery, for he travelled in lands at that time unknown, while his grave lies anywhere between Lhassa and Andkhui. The Ladaki history tells quaintly of his visit : " The Bada Sahib (Moorcroft) and the Chota Sahib (Trebeck, a German) came with great wealth to Leh. ' We must see the King,' they declared. It was said, ' What evil there is in Indians one cannot know ' ; and all having consulted, an audience was for several months refused. They presented a penknife, scissors, a gun and a variety of things, but the best were a penknife, scissors and a gun. They said, ' We have come to see the way in which you yourself, your Ministers and people are carrying on, and your Majesty's wisdom, and as there is a likelihood of this country being conquered, if we built a tower here it would prove useful to the King.' The King and Ministers said, ' If they build a fort no one knows what means of harm it may be,' and did not allow them to build the fort. Then they gave the King a letter in a box and said, ' Accept this : it may cure the King's mind.' They stayed both through summer and winter and then departed."

Moorcroft's prognostications did, in fact, come true, for little more than a decade later Ladak was conquered by a Kashmir army under Zorawar Singh. Poor as the country is, the Maharajah of Kashmir gained, at any rate, one valuable prize in the sapphire mines of Zaskar, the secret of which was given away to him by a lama in the ' earth-snake ' year. More than half a ton of the jewels is

reputed to have been then carried away—"Thus this King was exalted beyond his great forefathers. In the durbar of the great English Queen, he ranked before the other minor Kings of India. He had a throne No. 1 and a salaam of 41 guns. But from this time the Maharajah's health became weak; he became unhappy and the regularity in affairs suffered"!

After Moorcroft came Henderson, in wholly inefficient disguise; Vigne, who, like Marco Polo, gave his name to a race of wild sheep; 'Jonsen,' Wazir of Ladak, he who in a former existence was Corporal Johnson of the British Army—what wonderful people are these British corporals! Then Ney Elias, the explorer, and first Commissioner in charge of the Central Asian trade. With the opening of the road a new era started, though, as always, there were not wanting those who regretted the good old days. To quote our historian again: "Great numbers of merchants came from all the frontiers and cheats abounded. People became clever and sharp: they learnt Persian and Dogra grammar and arithmetic: they became bad and haughty in many respects."

In the world I doubt there being a land more priest-ridden than Ladak—except Tibet itself. Religion is in the air a Ladaki breathes, in the water he drinks and in every action of the day. Every natural phenomenon is the vehicle of malignant beings of one kind or another. Demons dwell in the clouds, haunt mountains, lakes, glaciers, and lurk among boulders and in caves. They are present in dust-storms, in earthquakes, in dead bodies, in smells. Their expulsion or exorcism is the function of necromancers, astrologers, magicians and sorcerers. Above all these the lamaistic Hagiocracy occupy a supreme position. 'There is no god,' a proverb says, 'without a lama in front.' The figures of amiable or more generally ferocious deities with

their unspeakable spouses fill the minds of the people, and against them the little Moravian Mission labour gallantly, but with no very obvious success, for the power of the priesthood extends also to temporal affairs. In the most remote and desolate places the traveller is aware of a strange sound trembling on the air, a drone of so deep a note that in another land he would look upward to search the blue for a flight of aeroplanes. Here his eyes would be drawn to a fortress-like pile perched high on some lofty crag, its white, sloping walls crowned with yak-tail banners. Perhaps this boom of monastery trumpets carries to the simple people of Ladak a message of assurance and protection from the unseen evils with which they are surrounded, and sounds to them as sweet as church bells to others in an English countryside. It may be hoped so. It would, however, require more than a sketch to attempt to describe the religious life of Ladak. The monasteries, those swarming hives of worship ; the temples, with their mysteries, gloom and dirt ; the intricate lamaistic mythology ; the temple services and ceremonies, vestments and furniture, and the parallelism that exists between them and the Christian ritual ; the mystery plays, dances and music ; the ingenious devotional machines ; the religious orders, the monks and nuns, their austerities and their grossnesses ; the lay brethren, artificers and craftsmen ; the two great rival churches, their revenues and their wealth. In spite of changes, it is round these things that the life of Ladak centres. Here at any rate East is still East.

VIII.

A COUNTRY POSTMAN.

A POSTMAN is usually a welcome individual, a bearer of friendly letters and interesting parcels, a receiver, at least once a year, of 'boxes.' He has certain facilities in the execution of his duties, bells and knockers, slits in doors and so on, and in cases where his missives are unwelcome, means exist of pressing them on unwilling addressees. In the days before the expedition to Lhasa, the Dalai Lama of Tibet was one to whom letters, those at least bearing an Indian postmark, were distinctly unwelcome—in fact he refused them. During Lord Lansdowne's Viceroyalty a tentative knock had been made on the Tibetan front door, tightly closed against India on the eastern side. Lord Curzon later on knocked more loudly and persistently, but with no result. The door did not move on its hinges. To be accurate, it opened one way only. Tibetans were freely allowed to pass south to sell their wool and shop in the bazaars of India, but the road was closed against traders from the south. Other unfriendly and aggressive actions were proved against the Tibetan Government, breaches of the frontier and things of that kind. Then it became known that the Tibetan door on the north side had been opened wide. A Russian postman, the Buriat Dorjief, travelled backwards and forwards carrying letters between his Holiness and the Tzar on all sorts of subjects, while the latter, by one of those occult metempsychoses common in Tibet, was reputed to have

DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN POLITICAL

become an incarnation of a Tibetan Saint. It seemed certain, in short, that the Power which had recently absorbed, if not assimilated, vast areas in Turkestan, would shortly proceed to devour Tibet, thus bringing about a coterminous frontier with India, a prospect no Viceroy could view with unconcern. In these circumstances Lord Curzon be-thought him—like a predecessor in 1846—of another gateway into the forbidden land, where it marches with an outlying province of the State of Kashmir known as Ladak.

Through the one and only town of the province, called Leh, the Central Asian Trade road runs, which begins at Srinagar and ends at Yarkand, in its length of 750 odd miles perhaps the most difficult road in the world. From Leh also starts a road to Gartok in Tibet, thence to Lhasa. It was through this little-known postern gate that Lord Curzon now decided to attempt communication with the Grand Lama. Just an autograph letter from His Excellency to be delivered into the hands of the Governor of Western Tibet, known as the Garpon, who, it was hoped, would transmit it onwards to the august addressee. The present writer, at that time a junior 'Political' who, with a Kashmiri colleague, had the charge of the Central Asian Trade road, was to be the bearer of the Viceroy's letter.

In Tibet a road happens naturally. No question arises about surface, gradient, or alignment. It is merely a convenient track followed by caravans from remote times, the passes not too severe for their animals, grazing at intervals not too great, water sweet or bitter, clumps of brush-wood for fuel. Even the latter are not really essential, for, by what must be called I suppose a merciful dispensation of Providence, caravans are in this matter of fuel to a great extent self-supporting, each one burning the dried droppings of the baggage animals of previous caravans. The road from Leh, where I had my headquarters during the summer, to Gartok,



some 250 miles, was of such a kind, save for the fact that it lay for the most part near the Indus, in this cradle of its birth a clear stream, often fordable, a striking contrast to the same river lower down, where, a mighty flood, it thunders through the gorges of Rondu, Haramosh and Chilas. This road was out of the question for me by reason of the Tibetan post at the frontier. An alternative road by Rudok was barred for a similar reason. Disguise, efficient in story-books, deceives nobody. A normal Englishman can no more pass himself off as a Tibetan in Tibet than he could as a Habshee in Abyssinia. So it was clear that the postman's only chance of delivering his letter was to travel swiftly by an unguarded route and drop in on the Garpon from the blue, to poke his head in at the dining-room window so to speak. Of course, no whisper of the plan could be allowed to get abroad. Little pigtailed men would travel night and day to give warning to Gartok, for though the Ladakis are now subjects of the Dogra Maharajah of Kashmir, they were not so always, and up to the present time Tibet has remained their spiritual home. To find a capable guide was a difficulty, but the right man was discovered; one who had a fifty-fifty share in a wife at Rudok, a trader in a small way in wool and borax; a pedlar of small wares among the nomads. As a one-time smuggler of *cheras*, he was a quiet and unobtrusive character not given to idle conversation. *Cheras*, it should be said, is a hemp drug produced in Yarkand, degrees more baneful in its effects than opium, but probably less so than cocaine, a 'dope' that does, in fact, cause its addicts to—

“Grow thin by slow degrees,
Ugly as chimpanzees,
Meagre as lizards—
Go mad and beat their wives,
Plunge, after shocking lives,
Razors and carving-knives
Into their gizzards,”

but more particularly into the gizzards of other people, so that its importation into India has now been prohibited. At the time I am speaking of it was subject to a high duty.

A few days before my intended start, the Wazir-i-Wazarat (or Governor) of Ladak came to see me. Unusually for a Hindu Raj, he was a Mohammedan, a noble of Kabul, who had found it advisable to leave his country for his own good.

"So you go to Gartok," he said, looking at me with a smile. I was taken aback, as I had taken pains to keep the matter secret. But it was no bazaar rumour he had heard, merely a 'little bird,' migratory, probably straight from Simla. No one, however, knew besides himself, and therefore no harm was done, for to him Tibetans and Hindus alike were infidels and polytheists, and doomed to burn. He was, moreover, a friend of mine who could be trusted not to talk.

"Who are you taking?" he asked.

I told him: Sitara, Kashmiri cook; Ramzan Ali, the Arghun (Mohammedan-Ladaki half-breed) who had been dragoman with British Joint-Commissioners for many years; Namgyal, *shikari*; some mule-drivers.

"Take one *man*," he said.

"Who?"

"My servant Mohammed, Pathan."

A tall raw-boned youth with black eyes and a laughing mouth was outside. Of course I took him, and the Wazir pressed on me in addition two sepoy from the small garrison of Kashmir troops.

"Tell your people," I said as he left, "and let it be known in the bazaar that I go to Hanle for shooting."

To avoid any chance of rumours getting ahead of us, preparations were hurried up, and a day later I left with my little caravan in the dark of the morning.



Outside the garden gates the road led through the sleeping town, past the Yarkandi caravanserai breathing out odours warm and horsey ; then through the main street and the silent bazaar. A passer-by could almost guess from the aroma the wares of each dark, shuttered shop.

Outside the town, when we settled down to the march, the cold air of the wilderness met us as the salt wind a vessel out of port. We crossed the Indus by a frail wooden bridge of the picturesque local cantilever type as dawn came up, revealing barren plains and rolling mountains. Villages, with many a mile between each, marked by a few gaunt poplar trees and exiguous strips of green, nestled in sheltered hollows ; and whilst the valleys were still in shade, a monastery, its white, sloping walls clinging to the mountain-side, gleamed in the sunshine. As we crossed a stream that came tumbling from a gorge, there came floating on the air the deep drone of great monastery trumpets.

After a long march we stopped at a hamlet called Gya, the last village in Ladak and chief place in the district of Rupshu, surely the highest, the bleakest, the windiest inhabited region on earth. The only crop that can be grown is barley, but often winter comes while it is yet green. The inhabitants are semi-nomadic, living generally in wretched tents of black goats' hair, very inferior to the big comfortable *yorts* of the nomads of the Pamirs, who in only slightly less forbidding surroundings do succeed in making themselves snug. No wonder Tibetan cosmogony provides for the wicked a frozen hell as well as the usual heated variety !

Next day over a high pass, whence one could see a distant lake, a patch of deep blue in a stark yellow plain. We camped that evening in a narrow valley, a hideous spot, the ground leprous white and yellow with borax and brimstone. Hot springs bubbled out here and there, and emitted sulphurous vapours

which hung about in the cold air. From here Hanle, our ostensible objective, lay one way, Gartok another, and my party had to be told their real destination. To my disgust the guide began to jib. He came into my tent hanging his tongue out. He would be killed, his family would be killed, everyone would be killed; he dared not go. Ramzan Ali was told off to talk to him and see that he did not vanish away, and for hours after the little circle round the fire had broken up, the two sat on talking and drinking tea. Then the guide got up and turned into the Ladaki's tent. Ramzan Ali came to mine.

"He will go," he said; "he is a poor man and wants the reward, and only asks to be beaten."

So that was arranged. The guide was to be called into my tent in the morning; there would be cries; he would run out, followed by myself with a stick; and at Gartok it would be known he had only submitted to *force majeure*. The little pantomime was duly carried out; the guide awoke the echoes with realistic yells, and, as I expected, he never went back on his promise, for the Ladakis are a simple and amiable race who lie with difficulty. Nor, I may add, did anything unpleasant subsequently happen to himself or his family.

Leaving evil-smelling Puga we turned north, re-crossed the Indus, and then over a high pass. The guide rode ahead, prospecting carefully to avoid *changpas*. That evening, when the landscape was golden under the setting sun, and men and beasts were feeling an intense longing for the sight of a distant clump of tamarisk that might indicate water and a camping ground, from the top of a little saddle he signalled danger. I laid myself beside him on the sand to examine with the glasses the detestable people who stood between us and our night's rest. They were a mile or so away in a hollow. Black tents, men, yaks, dogs, scattered about, all standing



out in the vapourless air microscopically sharp. The men were moving slowly around the encampment, evidently engaged in the daily quest for the dried dung fuel (argols), described so pathetically by the gentle Père Huc. "When one is lucky enough," he wrote, "to find half-concealed among the grass an argol recommendable for its size and dryness, there comes over the heart a tranquil joy, one of those sudden emotions which create a transient happiness."

Our caravan men, I fear, wished them no such joys, consigned them rather to nether regions—of the cold kind. So we turned about, and were still wearily travelling when night fell. The caravan closed up, and the guide in front became a black shape, rising and falling with the inequalities of the ground. Bound to his waist below his pigtail was a charm box of copper bearing on it in silver the mystic monogram, 'The Powerful Ten.' In the gloom this caught the light of the stars, and became a faint will-o'-the-wisp, leading on and into the mists of dreamland, so that when my pony suddenly stopped head down I nearly fell into the sky, or so it seemed. But the stars were reflected in a pool of water at which he was drinking; and we had reached our camping ground.

The fourth evening out we hoped to be watering at the Indus, the northern branch which unites with the Gartok stream above Tashigang. Through the day we were moving like minute insects along the upper edge of a plain gently tilted, so that one looked south and down across a wide glacis to the snowy ramparts of the Himalaya. There was no wind, and the dust of our caravan hung far behind us in the air. But for the soft shuffle of our animals' hoofs on the sand or the click of a stone, the silence was intense, broken now and again by a marmot's whistle and once by the music of a skein of wild geese high in the heavens winging their way south-

wards.¹ About mid-day we made a halt to eat, and I pulled out my glasses. A Tibetan landscape is painted in the half-tones peculiar to waterless regions. Here, under the intense light, colours seemed to melt into one another, the yellowy green of the wide plain, the blue of a distant lake, the line of salt shimmering white that marked its margin. But the thin veil that gave an appearance of misty unreality to the middle distance hung low, so that a group of far-off summits in startling reds and yellows and the silver of Himalayan snows stood out sharply against the blue sky. The glasses revealed a herd of wild asses moving about on the plain. A few dry sticks upright in the ground showed strange signs of life, and became attached to ghost-like bodies—antelope. Looking towards the far-off river, I thought for a moment I saw two dim specks moving east. “Do you see something?” the guide said as I continued to look. I told him. “Are they going fast?” he asked. But they had gone, and I could not pick them up again. He seemed disturbed about those moving specks on the caravan road. Traders or *changpas* would be a little crowd; men on foot would hardly be seen. Two lone riders might be bearers of news to Gartok; if moving fast, almost certainly so. Thus his smuggler’s mind argued.

From our line of march the monastery of Tashigang on an eminence near the Indus was just visible. Near it is the frontier post of Demjok, established in the seventeenth century after Basgo, a name not generally included in a list of the great battles

¹ The bar-headed goose breeds in a chain of lakes about Rudok, not far from where we were. On a visit to this lake the previous year I found I could walk quite close to adult birds without their taking flight, and they were flying about my tent all day. They are protected by the monks of the Rudok monastery, and, of course, I respected their confidence. Similar tameness is sometimes observable in wild sheep in the neighbourhood of monasteries. The fear of human beings seems to be congenital, since it is found in young as in adults. Tameness is acquired.



of the world, but among these mountains more famous than any, from Cunaxa to Waterloo. A Tibetan army had entered Ladak, and the King, to his own eventual undoing, had begged the help of the Delhi Emperor. 'An immense army' arrived from India, defeated the Tibetans at Basgo and pursued them to Tashigang, where a treaty was made in force to this day. 'Whereas Buddhistic and non-Buddhistic religions have nothing in common,' it began. Tibetan isolation was formally recognised, and even trade restricted to a few State missions. Only once since then had the seclusion of the Buddhist State been broken by an Indian army, when the Dogra Durbar, encouraged by successes in other mountain regions, planned the subjection of the vast empty spaces to the east. The invasion is presented pictorially in Ladaki frescoes—sepoys, elephants, guns, palanquins in endless procession up and down the white sugar-cones that conventionally represent the snowy mountains of Kashmir, at their head the great General Zorawar Singh. After he had penetrated beyond Gartok, his army was surrounded by Tibetans in superior numbers, now sure of their prey. But the Indians' chief enemy was Tibetan cold. The sepoy, poor wretches, were reduced to burning the stocks of their rifles for fuel. In the final attack Zorawar Singh was killed by a spear thrust, and there followed the panic and destruction of a leaderless army. Those who escaped the sword the cold slew; and so Tibet fell back into her slumber.

We were still pushing forward when evening came on and purple shadows crept among the mountains; the distant snows and islands of cloud flushed pink, and next moment all was grey and cold. A bitter wind sprung up. When it was dark we found ourselves among sand-dunes, and the guide's *ignis fatuus* plunged about like a light at sea. We had a short halt for a mouthful of food, after which

the pace dragged, as animals were tired and had been without water all day. About ten o'clock I became aware I was no longer hearing the muleteers talking to their charges, and found that the guide and I were alone. Of the two alternatives, going back to hunt for the caravan or waiting for them to find us, we decided on the latter, on the principle—which may be quite wrong—that two bodies moving about in the dark would be rather less likely to meet than if one was stationary. It was possible too that the caravan would wait till light and then follow our tracks. So we off-saddled and arranged to sleep and watch by turns. My head on my saddle and huddled in my Chitral *choga*, not even the melancholy cries of the guide could prevent my sleeping. Desert sand, however, makes the chilliest of all beds, and before long I found myself wide awake and desperately cold, the guide a silent, amorphous bundle by my side. Stamping about to warm myself I shouted, a feeble cry that was at once lost in the solitude. Feeble though it was, to my delight there came an answer, and presently the caravan struggled up. The Kashmiri, who loves the rôle of Providence, had brought a few sticks from the last camp; we had a little water in our bottles, and hot tea, some food and shelter from the wind, put a different aspect on life.

Very early in the morning Mohammed crept into my little tent and said he had heard voices about, and the light presently disclosed a group of mounted Tibetans a few hundred yards away. We supposed they must have received warning at Tashigang, and had located us in the dark by the fire. Mohammed, I had found, was one whose hands, so to speak, had been taught to war and his fingers to fight at an early age, and by his behaviour it seemed they were itching now to pull a trigger on the idolators. He had to be restrained. As we loaded up and moved off, with the river as our immediate goal,



the Tibetans made no attempt to stop us, but moved with us at a little distance on a flank. It struck me afterwards that they would have barred our progress then if we had headed towards Thok Jalung to the north-east, where there are gold-workings reputed to be very rich. I was told of a huge nugget found there 'as big as a horse's neck,' but it was buried again for fear of the guardian spirits!

After going a couple of hours we struck the northern branch of the Indus, and our animals rushed into the water to get their well-earned drink. After fording the river we crossed a sandy plain, and a few miles farther on came to the other branch, on the far side of which we struck the caravan road previously traversed by no European, unless it was Moorcroft in the 'forties. At a loop in the stream we made a halt to cook and eat a square meal. The Tibetans, whose numbers had in the meantime increased, now made a ring round us, evidently meaning to stop further progress. I sent Ramzan Ali to parley with a lama, who seemed to be directing matters, a big man in red robes, shaven and shorn, loud in voice and unholy in looks, one of the Hagiocracy who stand to lose most by the admission of light and air, figuratively speaking, into this dark land. "Tell him," I said, "that I am on a peaceable mission to deliver an important letter to the Garpon, which done, I will immediately return to Leh." Ramzan Ali came back smiling nervously. The lama, it appeared, was the Abbot of Tashigang. He was very angry at our having slipped by his frontier post. Why, he had asked, if our mission was peaceable, had we come like thieves by an unknown route? This was a nasty one. As for the letter, the Garpon had no need of it. We must return at once. So we pitched camp, and the Tibetans set guards round. It rather looked as if His Excellency's letter might be returned to sender. When nothing happened the next day, it seemed the

Tibetans' immediate plan was to contain us in our camp.

In anticipation of an impasse of this sort, I had brought with me a pony of the Khatgan breed, famous all over the Hindu Kush. He stood but 14 hands, but looked like a miniature hunter, and I had never got to the bottom of him. If Lal Kafir, so called from a coat like burnished copper, had a fault, it was an unpleasant propensity to dance sideways along a narrow mountain road. My plan was to gallop through the guards, and once past them I knew no Tibetan pony could catch him, or even, as they say, come up with his dust, and so to Gartok. As a proverb says, 'A person who is sent has nought to do but convey his message.' Lal was brought to my tent very early next morning, and when there was sufficient light I set off. The Tibetans seemed to be on the alert, as a number of men made a rush through to stop me. With a rider shouting and striking with his crop, Lal went through these without a check, scattered the teapots of a Tibetan camp kitchen, nearly down over a tent rope, then splash through the river to avoid a knot of men on the way, and we were clear. By the time the Tibetans had blown up their fuses and fired a few shots I was well away. After going a little distance I eased Lal and took a look round. Some mounted Tibetans were following, one rider some distance ahead of the rest, but it was easy to keep away from them all.

The exhilaration of a queer adventure was not to last very long. The low buildings that comprise the town of Gartok (Gar Gunsu), really a head-quarter of nomads, were just discernible in the distance—it was now about noon—when out of a depression in the ground arose a dark mass of men coming in my direction—an army, in fact, if the word may be used for a hundred or so Tibetans mounted and on foot. They were moving on a broad front,



in the centre of which, under a red umbrella, was one in a fur robe with a golden straight-brimmed hat of highly glazed papier-maché, a wonderful person who could be none other but the Garpon himself. Riding up to him, I saluted him in the few Tibetan words I knew, but he gave no reply. Instead, four stalwart fellows seized my pony's reins and pulled him round, and I found myself accompanying the crowd in the direction of my camp. Though it did not appeal to me at the time, they were a wonderfully picturesque crowd, in garments of leather, panther skins, or dark blue homespun yellow spotted. Most of them wore high red boots, and on their heads flat caps, below which their hair was cut straight across their low foreheads. They carried swords, the scabbards of some of them being decorated with silver and corals. These were stuck crosswise in their belts. Their long matchlocks were furnished with hinged rests made of a pair of antelope horns, folded forward when carried to make an ugly-looking pike.

All my protests had been received in complete silence. Presently the mounted man I had seen behind me in front of the others drew near. It was Mohammed, who unslung his rifle and remained in the offing. Disliking the prospect of being brought to my camp 'in charge,' I assumed quiescence for some time, and then suddenly dug my heels into Lal's sides. He gave a mighty rear and plunge, but the Tibetans hung on, and several others, drawing their swords and making hideous grimaces, rushed at me. I had taken the precaution of leaving my Mauser pistol behind, otherwise that moment would have seen possibly the end of a Tibetan or two, but more probably that of a postman. A fracas was certainly no part of my programme. As it was, the Garpon intervened in time. The humour of the situation was supplied by Mohammed, whom I suddenly noticed circling his pony round at a gallop

DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN POLITICAL

with his rifle covering everyone in turn, and evidently intending a shot into the brown, a proceeding from which he was dissuaded by my earnest shouts.

When we arrived back at my camp I was relieved to find myself free, but the Tibetan crowd began swarming among the tents, evincing curiosity of a rude and disagreeable kind that soon becomes acquisitive and dangerous. The Garpon was no longer in evidence, and I felt it necessary to display the few teeth I possessed. As I went into my tent to get my rifle, a Tibetan who followed me was sent flying. Then with Mohammed and the two sepoys we began to push the crowd back. The moment was critical. The Tibetans when pressed gave way, but others closed in again. Some were blowing up the matches of their rifles, and if a single shot had been fired a 'regrettable incident' would certainly have followed. Mohammed again made me feel nervous. I saw one Tibetan—the Pathan red-faced behind him—shoot, in a sort of parabola, out of the cooking tent into the river. Somehow or other to my relief the camp was at last cleared, and Mohammed and the two sepoys were posted as sentries, which done I sent Ramzan Ali with a letter to the Garpon warning him that intruders at night would be fired on. He sent no reply, but presently I saw his tent go up a couple of hundred yards away. The night was spent in visiting my outposts, so to speak, and when day dawned without further incident I felt that the game had been half won, or at any rate if I was to have an interview with the Garpon at all, it would be more or less on equal terms and not in the embarrassing relationship of captive and Governor.

After a decent interval I sent Ramzan Ali to interview the Garpon and try to induce him to come over for a pow-wow: no easy matter, as, Tibetan-like, his fixed idea was somehow or other to get the foreigner out of his country without an interview. As men and ponies had already been put



on short rations, had he kept on saying and doing nothing he would certainly have attained his object. Ramzan Ali, however, was one who—to use an Eastern figure—was able to ‘submit with assurance the wares of his argument to the gaze of purchasers in the market of subtleties.’ In our more homely idiom he could talk the hind-leg off a donkey; and he came back successful. Perhaps he made out that my grain bags had no bottom like the widow’s ephah—a belief that would present no inherent difficulties in Chang Thang. So a meeting was arranged for to-morrow. The square durbar tent brought for the occasion was pitched, camp-chairs decently clad with silk, the Union Jack run up on the camp flag-staff. I was in uniform; my three armed men formed a guard of honour. Ramzan Ali had even persuaded the Garpon that since I myself would meet him on foot, it would be fitting for him to dismount from his big white mule with the scarlet trappings at the limit of my camp.

The Garpon, accompanied by his important advisers, including the Abbot of Tashigang, straddled up to my tent. The latter during the whole of the interview never ceased to swing his prayer-wheel, an instrument of devotion described with masterly ambiguity by a Buddhist pilgrim of 1500 years ago as being of ‘incredible efficacy.’ The Governor’s appearance was that of an upper-class Tibetan—short, a bullet head, a snub nose, thick lips, yet not unpleasing so far as he could be judged with his eyes always concealed by enormous goggles. After seating himself he began in a high voice to ask what I meant by it all. I replied that after he had honoured me by partaking of refreshment I would explain my visit. So my boxes of sweet biscuits, crystallised fruit and suchlike were opened, and under the influence of tea with tinned milk and lots of sugar the potentate thawed. The talk ranged from Royalties to railways, telephones to tea-gardens,

DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN POLITICAL

elephants to aeroplanes—flying machines had even then left the earth—but of all the achievements of Western civilisation I described, one only seemed to arouse in him a sense of astonishment—a certain noble British cow that in twelve months had yielded 1000 gallons of milk !

“And why,” he suddenly asked, “do you British living in this wonderful country wish to possess our poor land ?”

“God forbid,” I said ; “my Government’s one desire is for friendly relations between the two countries, that both should enjoy the benefits of trade and that Tibet should be independent and strong. What they do not desire is that Tibet should be absorbed by the Power that is yearly extending her boundaries in Asia.” I might truthfully have added that, unlike the Russians, the British have not, and never have had, a policy of expansion in the East ; and further, that the millions of Indians now—to their incalculable advantage—under British rule owed this fortune entirely to the incapacity, tyranny and misgovernment of their former rulers. I went on to say that it was not within the competence of a messenger to discuss such high politics, and then brought up the subject of the Viceroy’s letter. The Garpon made a long speech, in the course of which he several times drew his finger across his throat. The gist was that if he dared to send the letter to Lhasa he would be recalled and executed.

“What is a mere letter ?” I asked. “You are not responsible for its contents.”

After much more talk he said he would consider the matter, and left. In the evening he sent over for Ramzan Ali, who went, and returned about midnight.

“He will take the letter.”

“Good, and what did you tell him ?”

“I said that if he refused, the Sahib would find



his way to Lhasa with it by some other route, and then the Garpon would certainly be executed !”

There was another durbar next day, and the letter in a big sealed envelope was ceremoniously delivered to the Garpon, who received it standing. He examined minutely the address and the big seal and the Royal coat of arms embossed in gold. He and his advisers were rather exercised about the latter. Then one asked Ramzan Ali to explain the significance of the strange beasts. I was a little relieved that he did not pass the inquiry on to me, as my ingenuity might have been unequal to the occasion. Ramzan Ali, however, gave a reply that caused heads to wag comprehensively. Whether lion and unicorn were henceforth to them the tutelary demons of the Government of India or possessed some mysterious significance in the white man's religion is doubtful. All Ramzan Ali would say about it afterwards was that he gave them a reply suitable to their understanding. For me the important thing was that I had obtained not only a receipt for the letter, but a written undertaking from the Garpon to forward it to the Dalai Lama at Lhasa.

I presented some small gifts to the Garpon, and a return visit was made the same day to his tent, where in the cause of duty I drank Tibetan tea. We started on the return journey by the caravan road next morning, and reached Leh five days later, where reports of my capture and ill-treatment at the hands of the Tibetans had been the gossip of the bazaar, and the cause of much anxiety to my wife.

The next scene, so far as the postman was concerned, was at Srinagar, where we had gone for the winter, some months later. Ramzan Ali, who had been left at Leh, suddenly appeared, his face black from the snows of the passes. He had brought a packet from the Garpon, and on opening the cover, the first thing that came out was the precious letter,



seals broken, thumbbed and dirty. The Garpon wrote briefly that he had not dared to forward it, though from the condition it was in there could be little doubt that it had actually been to Lhasa and sent back—with suitable instructions. So, after all, the Viceroy's letter was to be 'returned to sender,' an ending to my mission that brought me keen disappointment. A word for the occasion was as usual supplied by Ramzan Ali :

“ If your affairs are prosperous it is not due to your deliberation.
If also things go wrong it is not your fault.
Assume the habit of resignation and live content,
Since the good and evil of the world are not ordained by you.”

I have often thought that there was one who must have regretted the return of Lord Curzon's letter even more than I did—the Grand Lama himself. The next event was the bursting open of the front door of Tibet by the Younghusband Mission, and in the following year a Treaty, dictated in the very Potala itself—but not with the Grand Lama, for he had fled.



IX.

SPORT IN PERSIA.

PERSIA has been a land of horsemen ever since the legendary times when Iran and Turan played polo for the world's championship. Some 2000 years after this, in the fifteenth century, an English traveller thus wrote of the national trait :—

“ The inhabitants of Persia do much resemble the ancient Parthians in their continuall riding. On horsebacke they fight with the enemie, on horsebacke they execute all affairs as well publicke as private, on horsebacke they buy and sell, and on horsebacke they conferre and talk with one another ; and the difference between the gentleman and the slave is that the slave never rideth nor the gentleman goeth on foot.”

This is still true in the main, and the sports of ‘ gentlemen ’ are consequently to some extent limited. In olden times the wild ass—its meat was esteemed above venison—was their chief quarry, pursued on horseback with swords or bows and arrows. Nowadays, as the onager has practically disappeared, horsemen in parties armed with rifles and shotguns chase gazelles, hares, or indeed anything that runs or flies, firing from the saddle, a practice at which they are particularly skilful. The use of motor-cars for the purpose has, it is believed, been prohibited—for whatever that is worth !

Coursing is an old Persian sport. Their dogs were greyhounds, either of the Persian or the Arabian type, the former somewhat like the Afghan or

Powindah hound, now well known in England, but less feathered. Gazelles are coursed as well as hares. Sir John Malcolm tells of a match between the British Envoy's English greyhound 'Venus' and an Arabian dog called 'Kessab' ('Butcher') owned by a Persian grandee. The latter, with Oriental politeness, was deprecating his own dog and praising his opponent's. "What pretensions," he said, "can the Arab dog have to run against the Envoy's beautiful greyhound?" on which a lowly groom, with flashing eyes, incontinently burst in, "By the all-powerful God, the Arab dog will triumph!" In the end 'Venus' proved the faster, but 'Kessab' lasted the better. The author thought it fair to add that the gazelle beat both! And in sober fact, unless the greyhounds were favoured by soft ground or in some other way, this would be the usual result.

I cannot personally speak about the hunting of the little kangaroo-like jerboa. Morier, however, in his account of Sir J. Harford's mission of 1808, gives a description that is certainly worth preserving :—

"One of the most common methods of catching them is by the glare of a lanthorn, which seems to deprive them of the power of moving. . . . We hunted several with spaniels, but although surrounded on all sides, they escaped with the greatest facility. When closely pursued, they have a most dextrous method of springing to an amazing height over the heads of their pursuers; and making two or three somersets in the air, they come down with all safety on their hind-legs many yards from the spot of their ascent. . . . Even a greyhound has no chance with them; for as soon as he comes near, they take to the somersets, and the dogs are completely thrown out. Their flesh is reckoned very fine!"

The prestige and circumstance attached to falconry in the Europe of bygone times had its counterpart in the East, and the methods employed in the two continents were very similar. An English visitor

in 1599 related how the Persian Shah never went hunting or hawking, "but he carried forth above 500 dogs and as many hawks, nothing rising before him but it is game. For flies he hath sparrows, for birds Hobbies and Merlins; for the greatest sort some Hawke or other, and for Roe-deare Eagles." Things are not done on this scale nowadays, though the sport is otherwise similar. Anyone, however, who wishes to know something about Persian falconry should read the 'Baznama' ('Book of Hawks'), written by Prince Taimur some sixty years ago and recently translated by Colonel Phillott. From it he would learn about the great falcons used, the *Shunkhar* (Gir-falcon), the *Charkh* (Saker), the *Shahin*, as well as those of lower degree, and the art of training them.

He would read, too, of the quarry for each one, from gazelles and cranes to quails and sparrows. But a single quotation from this delightful book will convey more of the spirit of the sport than a page of bald description :—

"There is no bird to equal the common crane in valour and a fine sense of honour; when your balaban (a passage Saker) takes one, if there are a hundred others in the air, they will one and all drop from the sky like a stooping *shahin*, attack your hawk and perhaps kill her: till they release their captured comrade they will not again take the air. Ah! had a sovereign but five thousand cavalry possessed of the valour and resolution of the common crane, he could conquer the world! Well, as I said, you and your men must all gallop as hard as you can; neither pit, nor well, nor stream must hinder you. You must not draw rein till you are right in the midst of the fray, when every sportsman should unhood and cast off his saker or peregrine at the quarry that is nearest to him."

Could anything be told better!

In those prosaic days, and, indeed, since the invention of the breech-loading shotgun, falconry has

declined. The bigger long-winged falcons called *siah chasm* (dark eyed) are nowadays rarely seen. Though 'it is the pride and glory of a falconer to train the long-winged hawks,' yet their training is difficult, and for the bag they are less useful than the short-winged hawks called 'yellow eyed,' of which the goshawk is biggest and best. The latter may take the largest game birds, even geese and bustards, but this depends on the individual's training and courage. Sparrow-hawks, also 'yellow eyed,' are in common use for quails and small birds. All these hawks, it may be said, are cast off the fist, for it is not usual in this country to teach 'waiting on.'

For the big-game hunter who has an appetite for hard work on his own feet, Persia has a varied though diminishing fauna. But such toil is not for Persian gentlemen. The professional hunters (*sayads*), however, are as tough material as can be found anywhere; and though one may condemn their employment of 'unsporting' methods—sitting over water and so on—they, like hunters in other lands, are distinguished by a certain nobility and simplicity of manner. It is by such people that the art of *ahu gardani* (gazelle turning) is followed. In this, a single horseman by dint of infinite patience and observation works a herd of gazelle up within gunshot of a pal lying flat on the ground, and this on a plain that, except for small tufts of camel-thorn, is bare as the palm of your hand.

The mountains that buttress on all sides the central plateau were once full of game. Now, in the tribal areas of the west and south all game animals have become scarce, while some species, notably the lion, once plentiful in Fars, and the fallow deer that formerly lived on the wooded banks of the Diz, are extinct. The isolated ridges that rise abruptly from the plains in the east or form part of the intricate mountain system of North-East Persia still hold game: amid precipitous and often water-



less crags the Persian ibex, on the less forbidding slopes a wild sheep—the urial of the Himalayas. It is in the ibex that is occasionally found the 'true bezoar' of the Middle Ages, a pale-coloured stone with a high polish, still credited with magical properties. But there are indeed few animals and birds that, according to Persian beliefs, do not furnish mankind with useful specifics. "Almost anyone," as Mr C. J. Edmonds explains,¹ "will provide an effective love philtre or insecticide, or cures for baldness, elephantiasis, unpopularity, toothache, palsy, forgetfulness, ophthalmia, St Vitus' dance and insanity. Thus, he cites, of the crane and its properties: 'Whoever is afflicted with forgetfulness should mix its gall with jasmine oil and pour one drop in his nose, when he will remember.'

"Of the gazelle: 'If its tongue is dried in the shade and given to a virago, her domination will be overcome.'

"Of the ram moufflon: 'Cut its tail into three parts and eat one part each day for breakfast for three days, and it is beneficial for sciatica: but God is most knowing!'"

The Elburz range, watered by rain from the Caspian, with its Kashmir-like scenery, has a fauna of its own. In addition to the animals found elsewhere in Persia, there exist in these mountains a big wild sheep called by naturalists *ovis arkal*, the maral deer, roe-deer, bears, panthers, hunting leopards and tigers, the latter of interest as a little group far removed from their relatives of India and Central Asia. Their home is the forest, but in winter they are sometimes driven by snow into the reed beds of the savannahs between the mountains and the sea. An instance has been recorded of Turkoman horsemen surrounding a tiger in a patch of reeds and shooting it from the saddle. The animals mentioned

¹ "A Noble Persian Author," a delightful paper by C. J. Edmonds in the 'Central Asian Society's Journal' for 1929, Part 3.

are nowhere plentiful. There *was* not long ago an uninhabited No Man's Land where game abounded betwixt Turcoman and Kurd, people who, having religious differences, shot one another at sight ; but the introduction of order among men has deprived the beasts of their asylum.

Wild boar are in no immediate danger, for except in the vicinity of crops they are not harmful, and in a Mohammedan country they are not supposed to be eaten. They are found wherever there is water. In the Caspian provinces, where they are the tiger's main article of diet ; by the reed-fringed lakes of Seistan ; and on the banks of the Diz and Karun in South-West Persia and in Fars ; doubtless in other localities also. The Central India Horse, when on duty at Shiraz before the war, used to pig-stick in that neighbourhood. It was their impression—so I was told—that the Persian pig were fleetier than Indian, but did not fight so well. Bears, it is said, still exist in the Bakhtiari country, with what truth I am unable to say. It is certain they still inhabit the forests of the Caspian provinces, for I have come across their tracks and their depredations on wild walnut trees. So far as I am aware, no record exists of their having been shot by a European. During the war pig were killed in the legitimate way, with a spear, by British officers near Shush (Shushan of the Book of Esther), but, speaking generally, the terrain in which they are found is unsuitable for the sport. This, however, has been said of other localities which have subsequently been found to be riding country. It may be so here, and in this event the national taste for riding may one day lead to the formation of a Dizful Tent Club.

Representatives of most of the game birds of the Old World exist in Persia, a few only of which can be mentioned here. The 'old English' pheasant's original home is among the swamps north of the



Elburz, that of the 'Prince of Wales's' pheasant the banks of the Hari Rud. Everyone knows how in England the crow of cock pheasants follows a distant boom, whether of thunder or big guns. Here the same alarm call is said to precede earthquakes, a belief which is not so fantastic as it sounds. It may be the birds hear or feel preliminary earth tremors that to human beings are imperceptible. It is on the tops of the mountains mentioned that the splendid Caspian snowcock has his limited range. Travelling over the semi-desert plains of Persia one may with some good fortune come across the Great Bustard (*Mish murgh*, the 'sheep bird') in little parties. The Houbara Bustard, the name a corruption of *ahu barra*, a young gazelle, are more common, while in certain localities thousands of Lesser Bustards may sometimes be seen in the air or running on the ground before you—well out of range. Sandgrouse, I think, of all the many varieties, are common everywhere. Their metallic but musical cry from very high up attracts the eye to great flocks winging a steady course on their daily journey from desert to water and back again. The handsome francolin inhabits scrub jungles in the 'hot country,' and sometimes also vineyards and crops near villages, while the habitat of the *kabk*, very similar to our 'Frenchman,' as also that of the *tihu*—the little see-see of India—is the dry stony hill country. On ground of this sort in the north-west the English partridge also occurs somewhat rarely.

In most places crops attract migratory quail, calls and call birds being used to collect the flighting birds. Woodcock, called *jawal-doz*—a clumsy translation, 'stitcher of saddle-bags'—are found throughout Persia on suitable ground, and so are all the snipes except pintail. From a little damp hollow among the arid hills of Kain the writer has flushed a woodcock, a solitary and a jack snipe within a few yards of one another. On the Caspian coast in

DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN POLITICAL

autumn 'cock' arrive in such quantities that a Belgian in charge of the Asterabad Customs got 'tired of eating them.' In a similar way, as the story goes, some O.R.'s of 'Dunsterforce,' at Enzeli during the war, were led to protest against too frequent a ration of caviare, referred to with painful irreverence as 'this 'ere fish jam.'

All Persian lakes and rivers are frequented by wild-fowl, the most remarkable gathering place being the Hamun of Seistan, an evaporating pan into which the Helmand pours its flood of Afghan snow-water. In these marshes swans, geese and ducks of many kinds migrating from Central Asia collect in such numbers that a tribe called *Sayāds*, dwelling in reed huts and navigating the lakes in their reed canoes, make their livelihood as fishers and fowlers.

The imaginative Persians have many stories about birds. How the hoopoe (*hudhud*) was awarded his crown for having brought news of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon. How the migrant stork flies yearly on pilgrimage (*haj*) to Mecca and so has gained the title of *Haji Laklak*. How the pelican carries in her pouch water and fish for her young in the desert and has become *Saga*, the water-carrier. How, when locusts threaten, thousands of friendly starlings may be summoned to destroy them by hanging in a tree a pot of water from the 'starling spring' at Kasvin. Such tales betoken feelings of friendship for feathered creatures. Unfortunately general conditions prevailing in Persia have not been of a kind in which game laws could be introduced, or if introduced could be made effective. No close season exists for big game or small. Though it is natural that in times of transition attention should be mainly directed to human advancement, yet it is greatly to be hoped that under the new régime Persian birds and beasts will not be forgotten. They can ill afford to wait.



X.

HALLAL OR HARAM?

I SUPPOSE that in the last resort the real excuse for a decent person killing living creatures is that they are good to eat—or else noxious or dangerous. Shooting beasts that do not come within these categories affords astonishingly little satisfaction, the sentiment—one may almost call it an instinct—no doubt dating back to times when hunting was the business of mankind.

Anyhow, to have to leave a game animal dead on the ground as unfit for food offends one's sense of rightness. But in Moslem lands it is a common experience. The stag, ibex, whatever it may be, falls to the shot and goes rolling down the hillside. The native *shikari*, knife in hand, plunges down after him. Over the dead animal the sportsman is told that by the time the *shikari* arrived it was already dead, and so the clean-killed beast is *murdar*, carrion, unfit for food. Not the least annoying part of the matter is that the better placed the bullet, the more likely it is that the meat will be pronounced by your native hunter to be *haram*, or unlawful food.

This refers, of course, to Mohammedan stalkers. The Islamic law on the subject is based on the Mosaic prohibition against eating the thing that died 'of itself'—in hot countries, no doubt, a useful rule. The accepted doctrine, however, amongst Moslem *shikaris* goes further, and amounts to this,

that the meat of an animal (of lawful species) only becomes lawful food or *hallal*¹ if the throat has been cut while life still remains. There are, of course, *shikaris*, and one may be glad to come across them, who do not examine too closely whether life has actually departed before performing the ceremony of *zibah*, as it is called. There is indeed a current gibe against Kashmiris that they wag a beast's tail with one hand (to show he yet lives) while cutting the throat with the other. Such wicked fellows are, however, in the minority, especially amongst the orthodox Sunnis. The Shias, who constitute the other great division of the prophet's followers, are perhaps less strict in their religious practices. They excuse, for instance, wine and tobacco—the sin is small, God is merciful; and they are a little less particular in the matter of food. Even ham, under the curiously chosen name of *ghost-i-bulbul* (night-ingale's meat), may sometimes be seen on the tables of the great in Teheran. But taking it all round the big game hunter in the East will generally find the prejudices of his native stalkers in this respect nothing less than a confounded nuisance. Apart from one's own sentiments, the loss of meat adjudged to be *haram* is often a serious matter for your camp followers and caravan men.

There is a proverbial tendency amongst priests of all religions to go further than the founders in laying on the people 'burdens grievous to be borne,' and it is so here. The Islamic law is not really so uncompromising in this matter as most *shikaris* think. Dispensations from the rule mentioned exist, of which most *shikaris*, and even many priests, are unaware.

It is hoped that the following notes may afford

¹ The word *hallal* survives in the south of Europe, where the 'hallali' is blown to celebrate the death of a stag, a relic, I suppose, of the Moorish occupation. In France the story goes that the 'hallali' was introduced by Frankish nobles returned from the Crusades.

those who would hunt big game in the East sufficient acquaintance with a thorny subject to enable them to avoid offending the susceptibilities of their *shikaris*, who are usually excellent fellows besides being excellent stalkers, and perhaps sometimes to overcome the scruples of those of them who are 'unco guid,' or unco ignorant. But it must be remembered that whether *mullahs* or *mujtahids*, the religious guides in such matters are all lawyers. It would be almost impossible to quote any rule that could not be disputed, and the present paper would furnish a committee of Muslim divines with as much scope for argument as the question, say, of Sunday games in our country, if submitted to a vestry of black-coated clerics.

To start with, however, I believe that even the most rigid Sunni would allow that if a man is starving he may eat anything. Necessity knows no law. Saadi expresses the same idea more picturesquely: "When a starving dog finds meat he inquires not whether it is Salih's camel or the ass of anti-Christ."

It is not necessary to say much about the species that may be eaten, as, with the exception of bears and pigs, Mohammedans may eat all the big game animals that we eat. Generally speaking, their rules are identical with those of Moses, with the various qualifications about 'chewing the cud' and 'dividing the hoof.' Pigs, of course, are unclean, also bears. The latter are *adamzad*, 'descendants of men,' and remarkably like it they look too when skinned! Hares: some will eat them, others will not. A prejudice against hares is, I believe, like the abhorrence of poultry among some of the Hindu Kush clans, of pre-Mohammedan origin. The question of birds is more complicated. For instance, I remember once giving some snipe to a Mohammedan *shikari*, who looked at them doubtfully, although the little thin throats of the wounded birds had

been duly cut in the orthodox manner. He said he would consult his *ustad* (teacher) about them. When the morrow came, he kept silence, and it was only in response to pressing inquiries that he told me the verdict. This was that the birds were not exactly *haram* (unlawful), but *makruh* (disgusting). Permissible, but not fit food for a decent man!

Fishes and locusts are lawful food, and by reason of their possessing gills the ceremony of throat-cutting is dispensed with. The legend about this is that when Ibrahim (Abraham), always spoken of as Khalilullah, 'the friend of God,' was prevented by the angel from sacrificing Ishaq (Isaac), he is said to have thrown his knife away. In the air it cut the throat of a locust, and then, falling into water, that of a fish. Ever since then these creatures have had slit throats or gills, and have been *hallal* with no further trouble.

The ceremony of *zibah* consists, as has been said, in cutting an animal's throat while it is still alive, and invoking simultaneously the name of God. The formula for the latter varies amongst Sunnis and Shiah. Sunnis must use the expression called *Takbir*, "*Bismilla u Allah Akbar*" (In the name of God, the Great). But Shiah hold that the essential thing is the name of God, while his attributes are non-essentials. Sunnis, again, unlike Shiah, hold that Arabic and Arabic only must be the language used.

There seems to be a difference of opinion whether the invocation *must* be made by a Mohammedan, or whether it may not also be made by a Christian or Jew. It certainly could not be made by an idol-worshipper, polytheist, or infidel. The arguments in favour of the narrower view need not be mentioned here. In favour of the more liberal opinion, it may be urged that Christians and Jews are authorised to perform the ceremony because they are

Ahl i Kitab (People of the Book). In Central Asia, for example, many Jews earn a livelihood as butchers and sell meat to Mohammedans. There is also the story of the prophet Mohammed having been poisoned by eating meat prepared by a Jewish woman. In this and similar matters there is greater diversity of view amongst Shiahhs, who are bound by the pronouncements of their *mujtahids*, than amongst the Sunnis who have written rules.

As regards the necessity for the ceremony of throat-cutting being carried out whilst the animal still lives, it is not surprising to find that the ordinances of Islam are not really so ill-suited to the needs of a hunting community as is believed by the ignorant. Texts exist in the *Hidaya* and elsewhere which give the matter a different and more common-sense aspect. There are in the first place actually two kinds of *zibah*, that of 'rule' and that of 'emergency.' That of 'rule' may be described as the 'purification' of a domestic animal or a wild animal that has been 'reduced into possession.'

"The purifying of rule is to cut the throat between the top and bottom; the windpipe, gullet and two arteries must be severed."

It is in accordance with this rule that *shikaris* have the annoying habit of cutting a beast's throat high up the neck, in fact just under the lower jaw, a practice that completely spoils a head as a 'stuffer.' The only animal whose throat may be cut at the base of the neck is a camel! Though wild camels exist in Central Asia, I doubt any of my readers hankering after shooting one, much less wanting the head of a *Camelus bactrianus* in his hall!

"The purifying of emergency consists in wounding, puncturing, or bleeding in *any* part of the body."

A further explanation of the '*zibah* of emergency' runs thus :—

"And it is sufficient to wound an animal like an ox or sheep or goat which has run wild. It is like a wild game animal, and if it is not killed before it falls into a well, or if it runs away or attacks its pursuer (and is killed), the wounding of it is sufficient for *hallal*."

This is good authority for deeming any game animal that has been wounded and dies without the throat having been cut to be lawful, provided, of course, that the name of God has been taken at the time of wounding. But there are limitations on instruments that may be used and the *kind* of wounding :—

"And *zibah* is allowed with all things that can cut the veins"; and again : "The blood must issue."

The question arises whether wounding by a rifle bullet comes within the four corners of these definitions. The Arabic quotations in this paper were given me by an old mullah of Swat, a trans-frontier district of India which has always been renowned as a hotbed of bigotry and fanaticism. Like all his brotherhood, this divine would not be likely to err on the side of liberality, and if a text admitted more than one interpretation, Calvinist-like, he would be tolerably certain to give his support to that which was least palatable. When questioned, he stated that though an arrow would be permissible, a bullet, being a blunt instrument, would not. "The bleeding," he quoted, "may be done by fire (!), a piece of reed or a sharp stone." The rules date back, of course, to the days of arrows and javelins, stones and clubs. A query was hazarded about the modern compound bullet, which breaks up on impact and presents, with its nickel or copper envelope, sharp ragged edges which would certainly



'cut the veins.' This was a poser. But the old gentleman's honesty stood the test. After deep consideration, and with evident reluctance, he admitted that a bullet of this kind *might* come within the definition of 'things that cut the veins,' and that the *zibah* of emergency by its means would therefore be lawful.

This, however, does not end the matter. From another text it seems that the death of the animal must be directly caused by the wound; there must be no possibility of any other more immediate cause of death :—

"And if after being shot the victim falls into water so that it dies in water, it is unlawful."

"And if it is an aquatic bird and falls into water, and is drowned in it after being wounded, it is unlawful, but if it is not drowned it is lawful."

"And if the victim is on a hill and falls and dies (from the fall) it is unlawful according to all authorities."

When availing himself of the general sanction for deeming an animal lawful that has been shot and dies before the throat can be cut, it is incumbent on the hunter that he should pursue the beast at once :—

"And it is necessary not to lose time in pursuing the victim if it has disappeared with the missile in it."

"And if he does not follow it, but *happens* to find it dead he must not eat it"; and again: "It is undesirable to eat a game animal which has been lost by the hunter, as it may have been killed by beasts."

The texts quoted are recognised by the great orthodox Sunni division of Mohammedans. The Shiahhs rely absolutely on the opinions of their *mujtahids*, but these would generally be based on recognised traditions. It may be taken that on the subject dealt with here, there would be little variance in the doctrine and practice of the two divisions,

at any rate as regards essentials. Here, for instance, are some Shiah rulings, in the usual form of question and answer :—

Question. “ Why has *Tasmia* (utterance of God’s name) been made compulsory to make the flesh of animals lawful ? ”

Answer.—“ The object of *Tasmia* is that the slayer in the act of cutting the throat of an animal, or the hunter at the time of despatching an instrument, whether a trained dog, a sword, a spear, an arrow or any other thing that has an iron point, should invoke the name of God, there being no difference in expressions such as, ‘ In the name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate,’ ‘ In the name of God,’ ‘ In the name of God the High,’ ‘ In the name of God the High, the Great,’ &c. Such [invocation] is sufficient even if made in the Persian language. The Koran says, ‘ And do not eat of any slaughtered animal on which God’s name has not been taken, but eat as much as you can of an animal on which the name of God has been pronounced.’ Imam Jafir Sadiq says, ‘ Eat whatever has been killed by a dog if God’s name has been taken over it.’ ”

Question. “ Does a quarry become lawful if the hunter acquires it by the despatch of a dog or something else ? ”

Answer. “ Yes. The condition is there should be the intention of acquiring the animal. It follows that in the absence of such intention, even if the quarry is killed by an instrument of hunting discharged by chance, the game is not lawful. See traditions of Mashaik-ut-Salasa : ‘ They inquired from Imam Jafir Sadiq as to the lawfulness of an animal which had been killed by a dog who had concealed himself and had not been despatched by his master. The Imam replied that it was not lawful. It is only lawful if the quarry is killed by the dog after his master has pronounced the *Tasmia*.’ Again, Al-Jawahir says : ‘ If the dog has gone of his own will and has killed the game, or if the hunter has discharged an arrow at a target and by chance the quarry who was passing was killed, the eating thereof is not lawful.’ ”

Question. “ The hunter despatches an instrument of hunting which wounds the quarry and the quarry disappears from sight and is afterwards found killed. Is this game lawful ? ”

Answer. “ The condition rendering the game lawful is

that it must be killed by the instrument despatched and that the instrument be wholly the cause of death. See Al-Jawahir: 'If the hunter find the game killed after it has disappeared, it is not lawful because of the possibility that it has not been killed by him, unless the dog is standing over the game or the hunter finds his arrow in the body of the game.' See tradition of Horez: 'They inquired from Imam Jafir Sadiq whether a quarry which had been wounded and found on the following day was lawful. The Imam replied that if the hunter knew that death had been due to his arrow the game was lawful, provided that at the time of discharging the arrow God's name had been pronounced.' See again the tradition of Mahommed bin Kais: 'According to Imam Jafir, Hazrat Ali said that if the hunter found his arrow in the body of an animal, but did not know when he had killed it, it was not lawful to eat.' See also the tradition of Alnawi: 'Addi, son of Hatim, relates that he told the Prophet that he was a hunter and asked about a quarry which had been wounded by an arrow and found dead after two or three nights. The Prophet replied that the quarry was lawful if the hunter found marks of his arrow in the body and was certain that his arrow had caused its death and that there were no signs of interference with the body by beasts.'"

Sunnis do not, I believe, admit the lawfulness of an animal killed by a dog, but with this exception, it is evident that the difference in the principles accepted by the two great Mohammedan sects is not great. Omitting special cases in which big game sportsmen are not likely to be interested, the general conclusion may be summarised thus:—

A game animal of lawful species is *hallal* if he dies from a wound caused by a cutting instrument (including a compound bullet), *even if his throat has not been cut when still living*, provided that the following conditions have been complied with: (1) that the wound was intentional; (2) that there was no delay in following and finding the animal, or, alternatively, that it was killed in the act of attacking the hunter; (3) that the animal had not

been given up as lost ; and (4) that there was no possibility of a fall or other accident being a contributing cause of death. Provided also, and this is most essential, that at the time of wounding the name of God was invoked.

As previously suggested, the most doubtful part of the matter is whether it is necessary for the invocation and wounding to be by a Mohammedan or whether either or both could be properly done by a Christian. The writer's belief is that most educated Mohammedans and those that have come to be known as ' young ' would admit the lawfulness of the latter, though there are Sunnis whose *odium theologicum* is such that they will not accept even the *zibah* of a Shiah ! *Shikaris*, of course, are not educated persons as a rule, and many would doubtless refuse to be instructed on matters of religion by a ' Faranghi.' This is where tact comes in !



XI.

THE GRAVE OF THAT SAILOR.

THE advance up the Tigris was in progress. To me, sitting in my office in the Mohammerah Consulate, a *farrash*, entering hurriedly, announced the arrival of the Sheikh. There was a murmur of Arab voices, and the sound of a launch bumping against the wooden pier.

An Eastern potentate does not forego his mid-day sleep, even in war-time, without good cause, certainly not Sheikh Khazal. From the front door I saw a ponderous form helped up the steps of the landing-stage by black slaves, a slave to each elbow. A crowd, echinate with weapons, had already landed. He signed to them to wait, and alone followed my *farrash*, unhurried, dignified and picturesque as a figure out of the book of Genesis. When we were alone the Sheikh's calm fell from him like a garment, and his Israelitish face, heavy with lines and folds, was allowed to show the agitation he was feeling, or rather, it should be said, the agitation he wanted *me* to feel, for, being an Arab, he was an actor.

After looking round, the Sheikh laid his hand on my arm. "The Chaab have in fact risen," he said. It was not surprising. For tribesmen generally, Arab, Persian or Kurd, the importance of the greatest of all wars lay in the opportunities it afforded for paying off old scores against rivals. The Sheikh of Mohammerah, for many reasons, was heart and soul

with the British. His boats were burnt long before the war started. But this constituted good and sufficient reason for the Chaab being with the Germans in spirit, and in deeds too—if they dared. In the middle of the 18th century the Chaab were top dog, and a big strong dog too, but when, about a hundred years ago, the Kharkha River suddenly abandoned their town of Hawiza, they lost wealth and power, and the Mohaisin on the banks of the Karun took their place as premier tribe of Arabistan.

The Sheikh spoke about the effect the Chaab's defection would have on the Bawi and the Beni Turf. Other tribes might be swept into the current. He could not, in such circumstances—this he whispered—be certain even of his own Mohaisin. The Bakhtiari would be the next to go, then the Kashgai. The Persian Government was awaiting a lead from the Ilat to plead popular clamour and join in. With Iran on the side of the Turks, Afghanistan would not be able to stand aloof; then India—Wassmuss the German was playing on this feeling and filling the country with gold. The pipe-line would be breached. Without oil, what would be the plight of the British Navy? He was ready to sacrifice, had already sacrificed, everything for the British. His son was marching with his whole Mohaisin force against the Chaab, but help was needed. Two British regiments with a battery would not be too much, but more, if possible. A cypher telegram to His Excellency 'Coccus'¹ would arrange the matter to-day. No time was to be lost.

I promised to represent the request to the Chief Political Officer, who would surely do his utmost to help so old and staunch a friend, but pointed out that most of our expected troops were still on the sea. It was possible the General would not care to detach troops for a side-show. Was it not clear, also,

¹ Sir Percy Cox.



that after the Turk had been beaten, tribal affairs would settle themselves?

"If no artillery," the Sheikh pleaded wistfully, "then just two regiments, or," he hesitated, "if not two regiments, then one regiment, one *little* regiment." His voice went into a squeaky falsetto to indicate the smallness of the regiment he would be satisfied with.

"O let not my lord be angry and I will speak but this once." Sheikh Khazal pleaded like the patriarch of Ur. He had one last representation, not to be mentioned unless his first request was flatly refused. "You are not without knowledge," he said, "the Chaab have a harbour in the Hur Musa, whence a creek runs inland towards their city. When my son leads my Mohaisin against Fallahia from this side, if an attack were to be made at the same moment from the sea, and if with my buggalows there were but one British gunboat, such as now swarm like hornets on the Shat-el-Arab in numbers beyond the computation of arithmetic, then the hearts of the impudent would turn to water and,"—his eye glittered—"the lion of justice would strike upon the ground the tail of revenge."

Two days later I was sitting on the deck of a little river steamer. The Sheikh's scheme had materialised into the loan, for a few days only, of the tug *Mashona*, a tug without a gun, but with a British skipper and a red ensign. A hammering was going on where one of the Sheikh's three-pounders was being mounted on the fore-deck. It would make a noise, anyhow, and rumour would make more. A big buggalow lying near, full of Arabs, was to follow us to sea.

At mid-day we left our moorings opposite the palace, and the high-walled gardens where the Sheikh was wont to walk in the cool of the evenings, to drop down the Shat with the tide. Past the saluting battery, where the Sheikh's gun solemnly

booms once in answer to the single boom of passing British steamers, a privilege held by him dearer even than his 'K.' Further down, where the Karun, cold from the Zagros mountains, joins the warm Shat, one gets a glimpse of the city of Mohammerah embosomed in date-groves. Often, awakened from mosquito-haunted dreams, I had watched from the roof of the Consulate the flaming sun rise at the end of this broad and beautiful river vista, turning the grey flood into a band of silver and touching distant walls and towers with gold. An Arab *bellum* comes down the river. I hear the thud of paddles long before the boat shows, a dark speck on the shining water. As she comes nearer, there reaches me a single tenor voice lifted in song, and as each verse ends, the antiphonal chorus of the rowers pitched deep, deep down like an echo from the bottom of a well. But those who would cherish pleasing illusions of Mohammerah would be wise not to seek close acquaintance.

Past the confluence of the rivers, one could just see the grass-grown ramparts of the Persian fort, now derelict, taken by Outram of Mutiny renown. It was an audacious piece of work, which abruptly ended our one and only war with Persia. In these days when a section of our countrymen make it their business to malign all British motives, past and present, it is worth recollecting that apart from the relief of Afghanistan from Persian aggression, which was the immediate object of the Persian War of 1856, the use made of the victory was to obtain from the vanquished power not territory, not indemnity, but an undertaking to assist in the suppression of the slave trade.

Presently, rounding a bend, there slides into view Abadan and the frankly hideous buildings of the Oil Company's works. Here ends the long pipeline, to void into colossal tanks the viscous, evil-smelling stuff it has conducted from distant Persian



hills. No story of jinns and magic carpets spun by Shahrazad's nimble brain to occupy her cruel husband could be more wonderful than to-day's facts. For untold æons the black lake has slept quietly in caverns deep under the mountains. It is unsealed, and by its loosed power men, soaring above the clouds, encircle the world.

The river sweeps southwards in a mighty serpentine, and the palm-fringed banks slip quickly by. The tall boles grow so thickly that it is only from occasional gaps that one becomes aware how attenuated is the strip of greenery that shuts out the desert.¹ To Europeans the palms of Iraq are wearisome, but for the Arab, to whom mother earth offers nothing between palm-groves and desert, I suppose the feathery topped trees bearing their golden fruit and mirrored by water, embody all the terrestrial beauty that he is capable of conceiving. To an Arab no promised land without dates would be worth possessing, and one may well believe the yarn related of a chief about to make a first visit to England. As he stepped on board the steamer he asked which of the many kinds of dates was most cultivated 'in London.' The naked truth so staggered him that he sprang back on to the wharf, glad to have escaped a visit to so miserable a country.

A transport came pounding up against the tide full of soldier boys cheering for adventure and glory, and for half a mile after she had gone her waves broke along the crab-infested banks and rushed up muddy creeks. Arab buggalows we passed in numbers, deep in the water with immense lateen sails towering against the sky, beautiful as sea-birds—from a distance. One such with a full load of dates had been sunk while at anchor by an oil tanker a few

¹ In a paper that shall be nameless I recently read an 'answer' to a correspondent that will amuse those who know their Mesopotamia. 'We are not specifically told,' it ran, 'that Eve did any gardening, since Eden was not a place of flowers as we understand it, but approximated more to our idea of a private park!'

weeks previously. The owner, an Arab, sued in my court for the value of ship and cargo. The defence was that the buggalow, though anchored, had her sails fully set, which misled the tanker into thinking she was moving. On the other side it was alleged that this was the well-known practice of Arab masters in order to take immediate advantage of a breeze. Faced by this conundrum, I was relieved to find both parties agreeable to arbitration, the result of which was a finding for the Arab.

Fao, where General Delamain had opened the Mesopotamian campaign, was passed at sundown just as the Union Jack, hanging limply over the Turkish fort, was lowered. We did not stop, as we meant to await the Sheikh's ship outside the bar, where a sea breeze might be hoped for to rid us of the mosquitoes. These tigers had not quite allowed us to forget them during the day, but no sooner had the sun dropped behind the date-palms than, as a surgeon of the old East India Company put it, "they broke out of their lurking-places and beset us with that Rage and Force that no Resistance or Fence can be made, for say they, hyperbolically, they will bite through armour!"

Outside the bar there was breeze enough to send occasional ripples over the water. The mosquitoes had refused to venture seaward, so we ate our meal in happiness, after which the skipper and I re-examined the chart. The sheet pinned to a table before the wheel showed the north-western end of the Gulf, a region of shoal water, banks, bars, mud-flats and sunken wrecks, with creeks meandering far into the desert. The sea area is dotted with the figures of soundings, but the chart is full of all manner of instructions and cautions. Tidal areas are marked, areas dangerous during certain gales, landmarks visible from the sea, wells, sweet and brackish, and much more. Far distant as the Gulf is from our nearest possession, these Admiralty charts constitute

a wonderful record of devoted labour by our officers and sailors in one of the most evil climates of the world. Compiled with toil and hazard, they may, in a way, be said to typify British methods in these parts, for they are free to the world at large. Friends and foes alike may purchase one of these precious sheets for about the value of the paper it is printed on.

Among the archives of the old Indian Navy are buried many tales of the adventures and escapes, and the ends, also, of explorers sent out to survey these wild coasts and report on their wilder inhabitants. Selby, one of these sailor surveyors, tells a picturesque little tale of an experience when guest of a coastal Sheikh :—

“ Fasil came to my tent, and asked me to come and walk a little with him. We struck away from the encampment and presently came to a grave. Fasil, looking steadily at me, said, ‘ Kaptan, what is that ? ’ I detected the drift of his inquiry, so returning his fixed look, I answered, ‘ That, Fasil, is a grave, where honest men sleep peacefully and where rogues are unquiet.’ ‘ It is well answered,’ he said, and turned and walked back to the encampment.”

A less ready reply would probably have ended Selby’s adventures there and then, for this Fasil was no stickler where human life was concerned.

Here is marked the Hur Musa, an estuary of shallow water with a narrow, deep channel winding northwards into the desolate region called Dorakistan. Its ill-defined margins are generally indicated by the words ‘ patches of sand and mud at low water.’ Other deep channels branch away from the Hur to lose themselves in salt marshes, or to return again after labyrinthine wanderings. Unbuoyed, unlighted, swept by violent gales, it is a subject for a sailor’s nightmare. Few coastal landmarks are visible to a vessel inside the Hur ; one island, named Daira, near the bar, and farther on, east of the deep channel, is

DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN POLITICAL

marked in the chart a tiny circle with the words, 'Kabr an Nakhuda,' 'The Grave of that Sailor.'

There are, to be sure, many odd names on British charts, but this one intrigued me not a little. The Sheikh's representative was sitting near. "Who was this Nakhuda buried on the island?" I asked. "By God," he said, "I don't know." "Who *would* he be?" "Please God," he replied, "such a nameless one would be an Arab. Who else should he be?" He was a Persian himself, and Persians and Arabs, reflecting the age-old antagonism between Aryan and Semite, have little love for one another. "If you are not aware of it," I said, "do me the kindness to ask some of the Arabs what Nakhuda it was and what the manner of his death." He strolled aft. Coming back after a few minutes, he sat down. "Well?" I said. "What does it matter who he was? He sleeps now. But since you ask, I have inquired from everybody. By God, they don't know." "What! is it possible no one knows?" "Certainly, God knows," he replied.

Presently we saw the lights of the Sheikh's ship, the *Syed*, and she dropped anchor three or four cable lengths away. The Arabs on board were dancing. One could see white figures leaping in the moonlight. Their hoarse staccato shouts came loud across the water, and these were the last sounds I heard before enjoying the best night's sleep I had had since arriving in Mesopotamia.

Next morning we saw the sun rise from within the Hur. Speed was dead slow, the lead going continuously. Our skipper, who hailed from Glasgow, pale, yellow-haired, and little more than a lad, stood at the wheel in white shorts, legs and feet bare, eyes straining forward, alternately sweating and shivering with fever. As a salt-water sailor he hated this job, though he said nothing. The picture was always before him of this poor little tug, his beloved *Mashona*, stuck on a sand-bank, heeled over on her beam ends,



battered to pieces under a *shimal*. Of himself, a sick sailor who ought to have been in hospital, he did not think.

We made slow progress, feeling our way along the channel, barely distinguishable by its green tinge from the lifeless grey water. When we ran aground it was a case of out boats and the tow rope. The little freshness in the air outside was gone when we entered the Hur, and around us nothing but a hot, misty blur of water and sand, with the *Syed*, laboriously towed a mile behind us, the only break in the horizonless expanse.

What with violent sand-laden winds from the north-east and the action of rivers, this corner of Persia is gradually being pushed into the sea. Twenty centuries or so ago when the great Macedonian parted from Nearchus and his fleet on the Indus, and gaily appointed a rendezvous at Susa (Shush), his ships, after creeping along the Persian shore of the Gulf, pushed up the Karun (called Pasitigris) as far as Ahwaz. The Karun did not at that time join the Shat-el-Arab, but had a separate mouth, which possibly is now the Hur Musa. At any rate, the greater part of the present delta of the combined rivers was then salt water. Further back still, at the time, say, of the Elamite civilisation, the waves of the sea must have washed the red rocks about Ahwaz. That was some six thousand years ago, and the race of mankind was then very, very old. Yet I suppose there are still 'fundamentalists' who would not question our Queen Elizabeth's chronology, when, with delightful precision, she dated her letter to the Great Mogul, 'the year of the creation of the world 5523!'

On some of the mud flats sat small, desolate congregations of cormorants, but little other bird life was to be seen; even the ubiquitous gulls and terns seemed to have left. The cormorants, too, were taking a share in coastal cultivation. A few

DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN POLITICAL

years hence, when the chart comes to be revised, the barren sand-banks on which they sat like black stones will doubtless merit the description applied to tracts farther inland, 'slightly vegetated.'

The sun, distorted egg-shape, sank into a bank of haze, through a rift in which, only for a moment, a flood of gold and crimson shot over the shallow water, but the evening scarcely brought a fall in the temperature. On board the *Syed* the Arabs, who had been silent during the day, came to life, and with the darkness there reached us again the sound of their dance. Our engine-thuds slowed down, almost to stopping point, and the searchlight was turned on to sweep the water ahead. The buggalow by then was a mere will-o'-the-wisp light, at times infinitely far, at times quite near, swinging round mysteriously from port to starboard as the channel twisted. Leaning over the bow of the tug, it was enchanting to see the fish jumping where the searchlight's beam struck the water, sometimes a score in the air together, flashing silver against the darkness. All of a sudden a tiny islet, with a ruined cairn, gleamed white under the light on the port side. It was 'the Grave of that Sailor.' Immediately after, we bumped and were aground. By the chart we seemed to be on the wrong side of the island. The boats failed to find a passage back into the deep channel, and as the tide was running out we decided to wait till dawn. The skipper staggered from the wheel, where he had stood for eighteen hours, and threw himself on his camp-bed on deck and was asleep immediately. For my part, two cups of bitter coffee kept me wakeful, and I sat in the moonlight, thinking.

What storm-driven mariner had found his last port in this forsaken spot? Was he a white man—English, Portuguese, Dutch? Many an English sailor has made his last voyage up beyond the Straits of Hormuz, but the proper end for such would

surely be to lie 'where pearls lie, deep'—not on an island among sand-banks! Still, it might easily have happened so. One of the old 'grabs' or 'gallivats' used for coast work, aground, the captain dead of the pestilence, the relentless sun, no deep water to receive him feet first. Or was the unremembered sailor an Arab, a Persian, some unsung Sinbad from 'Balsorah,' a dealer in horses and slaves, a merchant of pearls, a pirate? Graves are certainly found in queer places. But a Moslem sailor's grave, amid treacherous quicksands! Even Nankir and Munkir, who sit in the tomb by a dead man's side to question him, might well protest!

'The Grave of that Sailor!' Might not the whole Persian Gulf be fitly so called? If there is foundation for the idea that those who meet violent deaths come back sometimes to haunt the spot, there can be few of its bays, estuaries, headlands and rocky islands that are not peopled by the wraiths of sailors from many lands, let alone those of the vast company that lie fathoms deep. The waves of this Eastern Mediterranean were ploughed by the keels of queer-shaped vessels launched in the days of the world's earliest civilisations: Mede, Elamite, Chaldean, Chinese. Till near our own time the Persian Gulf was the centre of Asia's sea-borne trade, the city of Hormuz on the Persian coast its brilliant emporium. 'The world,' a proverb said, 'is a ring, Hormuz its jewel.' It aroused the imagination of the distant West:—

"High on a throne of royal State, which far
 Outshone the wealth of Hormus and of Ind,
 Or where the gorgeous East with richest hand
 Show'rs on her kings barbaric pearls and gold . . ."

When the power of Spain and Portugal was at its height in the reign of Henry VIII., the glittering jewel awoke the ambition of d'Albuquerque the Terrible, Viceroy of the Portuguese Indies, and he

came with his ships and sacked the city, and slew the inhabitants in the name of the Church. The next century saw other flags attracted to the Gulf. Our merchant adventurers found the Portuguese had so established themselves as to make trade impossible, while the rulers of the Persian and Arab coasts were rulers only in name.

T. Wilson, a doctor on board an English ship in these waters about that time, and an observant person, found much to write home about :—

“The Portugals in these parts will not let any com-
 moditie passe to and againe upon the seas, unlesse it be
 first brought into Ormus and there to be customed, and
 so are become Masters of the Seas.”¹

The commander of the ‘Portugals’ was a certain Ruy Frera da Andrade, a super-filibuster described as ‘a proper tall gentleman, swarthie of colour and of an excellent spirit.’ To him had been given the task of consolidating the position of the Portuguese in the Gulf, and of rooting the English out of India. Among other measures to this end he invited the King of Arabia to a great feast at Muscat, and then carried him off to Hormuz, where he was kept as a hostage. On the Persian side, Ruy Frera had appropriated the customs due to the Shah’s Governor of the coast known as the Darya Begi or ‘Lord of the Seas,’ a wonderful title still in existence. The pearl fisheries, then, as now, a source of great wealth, naturally did not escape his attention :—

“... he had burnt up all the Boates both of Persians and Arabians, by reason that they should not fish for Pearle, and burnt all the fishing Townes. Now they that had any Boates were forced to carrie them up into the Countrey to hide them from the Portugals . . . for this the Arabians

¹ Letter from T. Wilson, Chyrurgion to Sir John Wostenholme. (Hakluyt Society.)



could wish all the Portugals throats cut by reason of their great hindrances in burning of their Boates and Townes and slavery which they daily did sustaine."

An island called Kishm became an object of desire to the Portuguese for the protection of Hormuz, and as a base for further operations. So Ruy Frera "brought the frame of a Castle ready made in his ships and got it ashore with great resistance, but so many as would not yield unto him he put to the Sword."

Things having come to this pass, Shah Abbas the Great, of Persia, feeling no doubt that it was time to do something or else resign his title of King of Kings, bethought him of a seafaring people that had lately been visiting his coasts. With their help was undertaken the memorable siege of Kishm and Hormuz. The Portuguese, shut up behind their frowning battlements, were invested from the land side by the Persian army, while their fleet in the harbour was watched and attacked by British ships. Among many other Englishmen, here died Baffin, he of Baffin's Bay, a name conjuring up visions of ice-floes in Polar seas, walruses and suchlike. What phantom beckoned the old explorer of the North to a grave in these warm waters? Wilson thus tells of his death:—

"When we came to Kishm Castle whereout of each Shippe was carried Ordnance to batter against the Castle with Powder and Shot fitting, where our Gunners and others went to try their valorous skill, when they had been two days on Shoare at that exercise, Master Baffin being then aboard, promised he would go ashoare to make a shot or two."

After adjusting the mounting of one of their guns—

"he loaded the Peece himself and placed it to his best levell towards a Peece of Ordnance which lay on the Castle wall,

which the Portugal was even ready to give fire unto, he fired his Peece so levelled, which dismounted their Peece and killed sixe men whereof the Captaine of the Castle was one; which the Persians seeing gave a great shout and happy was he that could come to embrace him first which was a great credit to our Captaine and our English Nation."

Later—

"Master Baffin went on Shoare with his Geometricall instruments for the taking of the height and distance of the Castle wall, for the better levelling of his Peece to make his shot; but as he was about the same, he received a small shot from the Castle into his belly, wherewith he gave three leapes by report and died immediately."

Another little affair briefly touched on by the surgeon tells of a spirit in these mariners of 1622 not unworthy of the land that afterwards bred the heroes of Zeebrugge:—

"So certain of them agreed and got things ready that night with their fireworks in each Barge, they went and boarded Ruy Frera his ship, and set her on fire which in lesse than a quarter of an houre was all in a light flame. But in the firing of her in one Barge unfortunately having a quantitie of Powder in one of the Lockers, one of the fireworks being flung against the ship strucke against some iron and rebounded backe againe and strucke into his body that flung it and tore out his stomacke that he died withall, set the Powder and the Locker on fire, and blew one man clean away, burning sixe others very shrewdly."

Kishm and Hormuz both fell and the Portuguese surrendered to the British, by whom they were protected from the Persian soldiery so far as was possible. The insanitary conditions after the fighting probably filled more graves than the fighting itself:—

"About the taking of Kishm Castle and the Citie of Ormus with the Castle, with the spoyling of five Ships and



one great Galley, one ship burned and the rest sunke, the which I pray God may stand to the good liking of you all ; for we had a terrible time in Ormus, having pestilential Fevers with sodaine deaths, and among the Portugals famine, and that terrible contagious heat that in my dayes I never felt the like, and such Sents of Dead Bodies lying in the streets without heads being unburned and Cats and Dogs eating them, within the Oast end was never the like seene, with infinite many Flies, and that the Persians would not let the dead bodies be buried, we had such mortalitie among our men that we thought we should have perished."

Ruy Frera of the 'excellent spirit' became a prisoner of war, but one may, perhaps, be glad to know that instead of ending his days in captivity, when the ship conveying him reached Surat, 'he in the night made his escape with the ship's boat, for want of the better watch keeping !'¹ Thus ended an episode which, in the Great War, would have ranked in magnitude as a side-show of a side-show, but which nevertheless turned the course of history.

For the Gulf, however, quiet was far distant. The crew of the *Fly*, for instance, a vessel carrying Government despatches about the end of the 18th century, can have had little cause for complaint about the dulness of a sailor's life. The *Fly* was chased by a French privateer, and after sinking the despatches and treasure, her captain ran her on shore. She was captured, the officers being kept as prisoners and the crew released. The latter managed to get hold of a dhow, and after a good deal of trouble, salvaged the despatches, but falling in with a fleet of Joasmi pirates shortly afterwards, they were made prisoners

¹ Frera, as a matter of fact, had by no means done with the Gulf. He returned, made two attempts to recapture Hormuz and fought many gallant actions against his country's enemies. But the Portuguese sun was setting. Their last stronghold in the Gulf was Muscat, where, besieged by the Arabs they had treated so badly, they fought like rats till their garrison was reduced to three-score. Their commander then threw himself off a high rock into the sea and the remnant surrendered, to be butchered without mercy.

after a stout resistance and carried off to the pirates' lair at Ras-ul-Khymah. Here they were detained in the hope of ransom and were paraded in the streets as curiosities. As no ransom was forthcoming, the Arabs decided to give the townspeople a holiday and divert them with the spectacle of a public execution. Then, to save their lives, they told about the sunken treasure. Pearl divers were sent for, whose operations were so rewarded that the pirate crews left their own vessels to take a hand. In their absence plans were made by the English sailors to seize the vessel they were in, but the plot miscarried. The pirates next fell to massacring the inhabitants of the coast town in whose waters the treasure had been sunk, and in the confusion the English escaped into the hills. After the search for them had failed, and the pirates had finally taken themselves away, the sailors found the wreck of a boat and from it made a raft, which they navigated to Bushire, and at long last, after more adventures, they reached Bombay with the despatches, which they had guarded with such devotion, still intact !

In the course of a war between Turks and Persians about 1770, Basra was besieged by the Shah's troops, and on this occasion British sailors found themselves on the side of the defenders. 'At this time,' we read, 'a squadron of ships of the Bombay Marine was lying in the river Shat-al-Arab, consisting of the *Revenge*, a frigate of 28 guns, *Eagle* of 16 guns and *Success* ketch of 14 guns. These ketches are commanded by an English midshipman and have on board a few English sailors ; the remainder of the crew are Turks ; they carry British colours.' The enemy fought by our midshipman was 'a piratical prince whose dominions lay between Bassorah and the Gulf called the Shaub, who had pushed up the river with fourteen of his gallivats.' The 'Shaub' were, of course, none other than the Chaab Arabs, whose behaviour the Sheikh of Mohammerah was



now so concerned about. History records nothing of the doings of this Midshipman Easy with his ketches and Turkish crews. It may be that, full of his strange adventures in foreign parts, he returned one day to his home in an English village. It may be he was buried on a sand-bank. I do not doubt, however, that he taught the 'Shaub' prince some things he did not know before.

Our gunboats were, as a rule, smaller than the corsair craft they had to deal with, and carried smaller crews. The pirates' tactics were to grapple with the ship they were attacking and then throw on board an overwhelming swarm of *ghazis*, thus neutralising the superiority of the British in guns. Being for the most part Wahabis, they fought with the enthusiasm of fanatics. The Honourable Company's ship *Viper*, for example, under some mistaken order, supplied a supposed friendly Arab dhow with powder and shot. Having received the munitions, the Arabs immediately boarded the *Viper*, which only beat them off after losing half her crew killed. The pirate terror in the Gulf reached a climax in the early years of the last century. The British trading vessel *Minerva* was captured by Joasmis, and after the vessel had been purified, the British captain was cut into pieces and the crew were led one by one to the gunwale, where their throats were cut amid pious invocations. The *Sylph*, one of a squadron that was escorting the British Envoy to Persia, having become detached from her escort, was captured, and practically the whole crew massacred. Strangest of all, up to this time the East India Company's authorities, 'from ignorance of the character of these people could never be persuaded that they (the pirates) were the aggressors and constantly upbraided their officers with having in some way provoked the attacks of which they complained.' The captain of the E.I.C.'s *Fury*, who beat off one of these attacks, was, indeed, censured for molesting

‘innocent and unoffending Arabs.’ This strikes a note with which, in these days, we are unhappily familiar. Then, as now, it seems, there was such a thing as ignorant sentimentality, if indeed it merits no worse name.

With the taking of Ras-ul-Khyma in 1820, piracy in the Gulf was checked, but the terror raised its head a few years later when the Beni Yas equipped a fleet of war vessels in the most complete manner, including cauldrons of oil in which to boil their prisoners. The *Elphinstone*, with a crew of 150, encountered seven of their buggalows with an Arab superiority in numbers of about five to one, and smashed them after a desperate and bloody struggle. Even then it was not till '53 that piracy, open and unabashed, was finally suppressed, and the Gulf had quiet. And now, in this present year of grace, our ships patrol the Gulf to maintain the peace they have established, to preserve order amongst the ‘trucial’ chiefs of the Arabian coast, to prevent traffic in human beings, to ensure to the pearl fishers the wealth they have so perilously won, and to keep the seas open for the commerce of all nations. One cannot look back without pride on the record of our small naval forces in this region, to whose watch and ward the establishment of peace and order in the place of violence and barbarism is entirely due. But many are the graves of British seamen over which the waves of the Gulf murmur their *requiem aeternam*.

The end of our naval demonstration may be told in very few words. As soon as the east began to pale the *Mashona's* boat was lowered to search for the deep-water channel, and by the time the sun had lighted up the surrounding desolation of shoal water and sand-banks, we were slowly steaming north again. As we left the sailor's island grave I watched a heron standing on the water's margin, and so little disturbed was he by the proximity of the tug



and her satellite, by the shouts of the Arabs and the noise of oars and chains and winches, that one might have fancied the spirit of 'that sailor' had returned in this form to watch over his body's resting-place. Next day we arrived at a point where the Hur-i-Dorak, a winding canal-like creek with muddy banks, joined the Hur-i-Musa. Here the tug finally grounded, and whilst the Arabs from the *Syed* landed to dance more fiercely than ever on comparatively firm land, our gun was shipped on to the buggalow, as drawing less water, to which unsavoury craft I also, so to speak, transferred my flag. A few miles on the creek became a ditch, with salt marshes and patches of dry land on either side. Here the *Syed* also came to the conclusion that she was, after all, a sea-going vessel, and declined to advance farther. There was a village in the level distance, and glasses showed some moving dots on the horizon—the 'enemy.' The Arabs landed. The Sheikh's 'peece' spoke twice, its echoless boom arousing some long-legged birds from the fens, but probably doing nothing more deadly. There was a crackle of rifle fire opened at enormous range, the bullets falling with little harmless 'phits' into the mud. Darkness ended the 'battle.' Next day an advance was being made when a messenger arrived with a white flag. The Sheikh's son had won a victory, and the Chaab had 'come in.' And so back, stern first, for there was no room to turn. As we passed, the silver-grey bird was still motionless by 'the grave of that sailor.'



XII.

PARTIZANSKI.

WHEN the fate of Kut was hanging in the balance, the Russian Expeditionary Force in Persia made a forward thrust as far as Khanekin, a position from which they had to retire as soon as Townshend's surrender had set Turkish troops free to deal with them. After that they were successively driven backwards from Kerind, Kermanshah and Hamadan. If the Turks had followed up their victories, they could probably have marched straight into Teheran, and the German project of a corridor into Afghanistan, and so to India, would have advanced a big step. They delayed, however, in the hope that German gold and propaganda would soon transform Persia's wavering neutrality into an alliance.

It was in the August of that year, 1916, that my wife and I, after travelling from Mohammerah through Persia, met the defeated Russian army, a ragged, tired and spiritless mob, straggling northward along the Hamadan-Kazvin road. After taking my wife back to Kazvin, I joined General Baratoff on the Souj Bulagh Pass, where he had entrenched himself. It was an insanitary camp. Bad water, heat, flies—all the soldier's worst foes were there. Only at night such things could be put out of mind. It was the usual custom for the staff to gather at a long table under a great chestnut-tree, the General himself very smart and well-turned-out at the head; the picturesque Cossack uniforms of the officers in

the dim light of hanging lanterns giving the whole scene a rather theatrical aspect. One evening at the dinner-table Baratoff abruptly exclaimed, "Now let the Turks attack; I am ready! My children have begun to sing. Listen!" From below, where the camp fires twinkled, there came with indescribable effect the low measured strains of a Russian anthem. "Wait," the General added; "this evening my Cossacks too shall sing." Presently a dozen or more Cossacks lined up behind his chair. A tenor led with the air, the others hummed the accompaniment. Perfectly done, the result would have been notable anywhere; in those surroundings it was wonderful. If they would fight as they can sing! I thought. War-tired as Baratoff's troops were, they were yet for a time loyal to a General who loved them as his children. I have in my mind a picture of him in later days when the red poison had begun to work—the white-haired General before a disaffected regiment, marching up and down the ranks, haranguing them with passionate words. Sullen faces changed and lighted up, till in the end, as the drums rolled, these children of moods were hurraing for the Czar and Holy Russia.

After I had been a few days in camp, Baratoff spoke to me about a small Russian force he had left astride the road that runs from Hamadan to Teheran by Sultanabad. With the Turks on their front, and hostile tribes on their flanks, their position was daily becoming more difficult. He had no Political Officer acquainted with the language and people available. Would I go?

As the direct road was in the hands of the Turks, I had to travel to Sultanabad by Kazvin and Teheran, a long round of some 300 miles or more. A lorry was returning next morning as far as Kazvin, and in it, after Baratoff had embraced me after the usual Russian manner, I took my seat by the driver.



Behind, the lorry was packed with hospital cases for the base, many of whom in the first ten minutes must have wished they had been left in camp to die in peace. The road, well made by the Russians before the war, had here the convolutions and steep gradients peculiar to mountain passes, and was, moreover, worn into ruts and holes. As we gathered speed, I noticed with misgivings that the foot-brake was not working. The driver made dives at the hand-brake, but before he could reach it, his hand was urgently wanted for the wheel. The lorry was running away! Now and again as we hurtled along, I got glimpses of the parapet of a bridge, where, far below, the river was spanned at a sharp bend, making altogether a very suitable place for an accident. The driver now abandoned his efforts to reach the hand-brake, and we swayed dizzily round the corners. Then the parapet flashed by—we seemed to be on two wheels—and suddenly the road opened before us straight and level. I regarded the driver, wondering whether in some pre-war existence his *metier* had been stunts for the 'movies,' and then, as he leant over the side of the lorry, understood that he was merely drunk.

In the town of Kazvin the squares and coffee shops were full with the heterogeneous crowds typical of North-West Persia, in a turmoil of excitement. No Russian reinforcements were on their way, it was reported, and the average Persian believed and hoped that Baratoff's army would shortly be driven into the Caspian. I found my wife in the local branch of the Imperial Bank, a well-known institution whose hospitable doors were always open to British subjects during the war, and there she began the unofficial duties which in various places in Persia were to be hers till the Armistice—ciphering, confidential clerk, registrar, typist, nurse and general help. After once more saying good-bye I left for Teheran. There, too, 'young Persia' was

out in the squares learning the arts of war. The sympathies of the Swedish officers who trained the Persian *gendarmarie* were generally with the enemy ; some had already joined the Turks. The country, in short, was a powder magazine ; not perhaps very high explosive, but capable of detonating more dangerous material farther east. At Teheran I found Moir, the manager of Zeigler & Co.'s carpet business and our Vice-Consul at Sultanabad. On the approach of the Turks he had had to shut up his warehouses and leave them in charge of the Persian Governor. He now came along with me, and I was glad of his excellent company and local knowledge.

On the dreary road between Teheran and Kum, where it crosses an arm of the Kavir desert, the guards on the lorry were thrown into great excitement by seeing in the distance a black wavering line of mounted men. Coming nearer, one noticed their good rifles slung over their shoulders, their active ponies, their voluminous dark robes and huge domed felt hats bound to their heads by scarves, the fringes of which fell nearly over their eyes. They were refugee tribesmen from Luristan and the Kerman-shah province, making their way to the mosque of Shah Abdul Azim, a general asylum for the oppressed and discontented of Persia. These people were not pro-British, pro-German, or pro-anybody, except themselves. They were just the under-dogs, for the time being, in their own tribal factions, the top-dogs having made their peace with the Turks, the better thus to carry on their predatory existence and their vendettas.

In blue-domed Kum we spent the night in a building that had been commandeered for the Zemski Sius, a Russian Red Cross organisation. The atmosphere reeked with wine and tea, and might be described as convivial ; so that it was not till after midnight that Moir and I sought the

repose of the dining-tables that had been assigned to us for sleep. Another stage through broken desert country with occasional oases brought us to the edge of a shimmering salt lake, a few miles beyond which we entered Sultanabad. The square, overlooked by the Ark (Governor's residence), was crowded by bazaar riff-raff and *sarbazes*, who stared after their own insolent manner. There was to be a public execution, and we caught sight of the executioners—'men of terror' they are called—doped, as the custom is—to work up their fury against their victim. Our lorry rattled hideously along the cobbled alley, almost touching the shops on each side, by covered bazaars, coffee shops and domed ice houses. Going down a steep declivity, we crossed over a high arched bridge spanning a stream that very picturesquely served the dual purpose of water supply and sewer, to pull in at a caravanserai which formed the Russian headquarters. Stopchanski, the colonel, was away on a visit to the outposts, so, leaving our conveyance, we rode on to the Zeigler house situated on the far side of the town. We were presently met by Moir's *mirza*, or head clerk, a young Persian with a fierce little moustache and very smart in a black frock-coat and an astrakan cap jauntily set on the side of his head. "News of the Osmanlis?" he said in reply to Moir's query; "news of the Osmanlis?—to hell with them!" And he dashed forward at full gallop; then, pulling his horse up short, he began circling and wheeling about, using his malacca cane as an imaginary rifle, shooting one Turk on his right, another on his left, another behind. In fact, he slew quite a large number of shadowy Turks—the very devil of a chap.

Moir's house, surrounded by a shady garden, was somewhat reminiscent of an Indian bungalow; some magnificent rugs and bits of furniture pulled out of the warehouse made it seem like a palace. That

evening my Persian servant announced a visitor, and there entered an astonishing figure in the dark red robes which the dignitaries of the Armenian Church seem to have in common with the Red Lamas of Tibet. He was tall and broad, his face, with an 'Assyrian' beard, thin and worn, while the eyes that looked out from under his cowl were large and brilliant: a being that might have stepped out of some mediæval romance. As he sat down his gown opened, showing riding-boots and a revolver. He was the Archimandrite Khoren, his flock the inhabitants of the Armenian villages scattered about Persian Iraq, at that time in danger from their wolfish tribal neighbours. Events had transformed him into the Political Officer with the Partizanski column at Sultanabad, though his first care was still the protection of his own people, a task which only his inside knowledge and astuteness made possible. Next to this—a sort of obsession—it was his aim, as I afterwards discovered, by any means to advance the prestige of the Russians at the expense of the British. We had some talk, and decided to go next day to see Stopchanski at a village some twenty-five miles out on the Daulatabad road.

As the lorry had gone back, and my horse, with two Indian cavalry orderlies, was still *en route* from Kazvin, I hired a ramshackle *kaliska* (closed four-wheeler) to take us out. Our road ran monotonously through low barren hills. The priest by my side was constantly stopping the *kaliska* to spy. Every valley that opened from the range on our left, every dot on the horizon that might be a human being, aroused his misgivings. "You," he explained, "in your uniform would be all right if we were captured by the Turks, but I," tapping himself on the chest, "would be cut into *small* pieces." And he spoke the simple truth. We found the Russians bivouacked on the outskirts of a village, and our noses told us it was dinner-time. Hunks of meat flung into



cauldrons of boiling water, with green-stuff, eggs, or any comestible that could be obtained, made Russian *borsch*, greasy and good. Persian bread filled up the chinks. Tea and sugar were practically the only supplies carried, and these not always, for it is the pride of a Partizanski force to live on the country. I joined the officers at their meal, which was the same as the men's, after which it happened that a Russian prisoner was brought up before the artillery captain. It was a proved case of robbery, and as such it was interesting to notice the paternal-filial relationship between the officer and the accused. The man kept his hand at the salute till his captain, with his own hand, gently removed it and placed it at the man's side. Finally, he gave the man an extremely long lecture, and the little matter was ended!

After some conversation about the situation, as the Colonel was to return to Sultanabad the next day, Khoren and I started back rather late, to meet on our way one of those little incidents that give a flavour to Persian travel. The way was long, darkness fell, and not even the driver's remarks to his ragged pair, nor the priest's caution, could prevent his head sometimes falling on my shoulder or alternatively mine on his. My dreams ended in sudden catastrophe—the yells of the driver, the crash of glass. We were upside-down, the *kaliska* disintegrating under a succession of violent blows. Then a comparative silence, for our conveyance had reached the bottom of the ravine which we had abruptly descended. Heaven knows from what dreams the Archimandrite had been awakened, for as he frantically tried to open the door above us, he began shouting loudly, "Save the British colonel! Save the British colonel!" I felt it incumbent on me to reciprocate, "Save the Archimandrite!" And with these mutual prayers for each other's welfare we extricated ourselves through the broken window. A box of matches afforded a light, by which we



examined the remains of the four-wheeler, which, having lost a wheel, was left where it was. The horses, poor wretches, having got rid of their tackle, seemed content to rest where they were. However, as they still had four legs apiece, Khoren and I mounted and proceeded on our way, the driver walking behind us, uttering the lamentations of the damned ; and so, as morning broke, we entered the sleeping town.

The Russians had, as I found, a cut-and-dried scheme for subsidising chiefs and tribes, a scheme from which the most important factor was entirely lacking. This was where the British Government, with its world-wide reputation as a milch-cow, was to come in. If I would arrange for funds, Khoren would do the rest. It was, however, obvious that apart from other good reasons, the unpopularity of the Russians and the enmity which Persians cherish for their Armenian fellow subjects put the Russian proposals out of court.

Some of the surrounding tribes had already joined the enemy. The Nizam-u-Sultaneh, Governor of the Kermanshah province, was with the Turkish General, Ali Ihsan Pasha, who commanded the 13th Army Corps. With the notables who were sitting on the fence, their eyes hungrily cast both ways, propaganda was perilously easy. Agents with money-bags would always be sure of an attentive hearing, but in the last resort the attitude of chiefs and tribes was determined more by tribal politics and animosities, and fear of punishment by regular troops, than by anything else. With details of the tedious and often unprofitable negotiations I then began with the chiefs of this area, by means of letters, *kasids* (messengers) and by personal visits, I will not bore the reader. The general idea was to reward those who rendered overt help and to keep others in a state of greedy and nervous expectation—*omed wa bim* (hope and fear), as the saying goes.

Nazar Ali Khan, Amrai, who bore the wonderful title 'Lord of Before the Mountain,' was one whom I was particularly anxious to persuade wherein his true interests lay, for though old, and with a reputation connected chiefly with drink and opium, he was a personality of great influence in these parts. The messengers who had travelled between us finally arranged a meeting near Zanganeh, a village between Sultanabad and Daulatabad. In a country where treachery meets with little reprobation, unless unsuccessful, the general practice in such conferences is for the principals to leave their escorts behind and proceed alone and unarmed to meet in the middle of an open plain; and this was properly arranged. 'Political,' however, at that time had what I must own to be a somewhat inflated market value. A warning reached me, and I did not keep the *rendezvous*.

A few days later the Russian colonel planned a surprise attack on Daulatabad, a town in Turkish occupation, some forty miles distant. As the capture of Sultanabad by the Turks would have tipped the tribal balance in their favour, so that of Daulatabad by the Russians would have tipped it the other way, from which it came about that the story of this area for the next few months was mainly that of the oscillations of this military-political see-saw. I should not, indeed, have been greatly surprised if there had occurred a repetition of that remarkable incident in Persian history, when the armies of two rival pretenders, each in occupation of the capital of two neighbouring provinces, set forth simultaneously and by different roads; with the result that each one captured the town of the other, without the inconvenience of a battle!

Stopchanski's plan was to attack Daulatabad, marching by the Baba Rais Pass, at the same time sending a party by the alternative route by Zanganeh to create a diversion at the critical moment.

DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN POLITICAL

As my meeting with Nazar Ali Khan was to have been near this village, I went with the latter party, chiefly to get some reliable news of him. Marching all night, we reached a point near Zanganeh early in the morning, and then, to avoid alarming the village, made a detour into the hills, and with some difficulty found our way across a ravine, which at Zanganeh itself, lower down, is crossed by a bridge. Near Daulatabad we lay 'doggo' on the hillside, listening for the sound of Stopchanski's guns. The attack was timed for about 9 A.M., but we waited till late in the afternoon, puzzled to know what had happened. Then a scout came back, signalling furiously. We were being surrounded. As we mounted, fire was opened on us from the hills to our right, while far to our left we could see regular cavalry moving towards Zanganeh, evidently intending to cut us off by holding the bridge and ravine. We won the race and got clear, and though our horses had had nothing but a nose-bag apiece for twenty-four hours, the Cossack officer was taking no risk and did not call a halt till we got within sight of Sultanabad. Stopchanski, it appeared, had been thrown from his horse on the pass, and the attack had been called off. While on this trip I ascertained that my late correspondent, Nazar Ali, had, in fact, joined the enemy. The incident caused a fall in the political barometer, which was further depressed by a reduction in the numbers of the Partizanski force in this area. It now consisted of 330 Cossacks and two mountain guns.

Some of the younger Bakhtiari Khans went over to the Turks at this time, and as there was a danger of more sections of this tribe, reputed the bravest as well as the best armed of the Persian Ilat, joining in the landslide, I decided to visit certain Khans of the Chahar Lang section, and persuaded Stopchanski to send with me 100 Cossacks and the two guns. The country traversed, with its rugged hills, its



grassy rock-strewn valleys and many streams, was an ideal retreat for primitive pastoral peoples, whose business was flocks and herds, their recreation raids and robbery. My Russian escort were a light-hearted lot, always ready to laugh, sing or dance. Even in their saddles they hummed jig tunes in chorus, and managed to jump about and kick their legs in time. As a Partizanski force, they carried mobility to an extreme, having with them no baggage, and, failing the shelter of a village, sleeping under their felt cloaks in the open under all conditions of weather. They knew little about soap, but at a river they would all off-saddle, strip themselves and swim their horses, and their hard, white, muscular figures were good to see. The evening meal was often a cheerful function—that is, when Khoren had brought in for the officers' mess Persian wine or *araq*. The former is very good sometimes—it tastes much better if you do not happen ever to have seen it made; the latter, a raw grape spirit, is detestable—always. Songs followed. All sang, but the artillery captain was a baritone celebrity, and the lilt and tunefulness of a drinking song of his, always called for and repeated, will long remain with me a melodious memory. There were speeches, of course—*ad nauseam*—in which connection I must not fail to introduce one Leslie—in spite of his name, a Russian subject—in charge of the purse and supplies. During the day in camp he would be seen sitting in the shade, a huge glass of tea by his side, paying inadequately for commandeered supplies. At the evening symposia his preference was for *araq*, and his ruddy face grew ruddier, his smile broader. On these occasions it was his custom to confide in me at some length how his ancestors had kinship with the royal Stuarts of Scotland, the documentary evidence of which he promised to show me 'after the war.' Then, for my benefit, he became the self-appointed translator of every speech in

Russian that was made. Rising slowly to his feet, he would take a look round and begin : " Our colonel is saying " (pause and smile) " he is *happy man* this day——" Substitute for ' colonel ' the rank of the last on his legs, and that, apparently, was every speaker's preliminary observation. Needless to say, the cause of this general state of happiness was the presence of ever so humble a representative of the noble British nation. Towards the end of the evening, after filling his pipe with my English tobacco—he once used my pipe, but I foiled all subsequent attempts—he would remark inquiringly, " Tabac de luxe ? " And the expression pleased him so much that he went on repeating it, like the dormouse of history, till he went to sleep.

At a village and fort called Imamzada Kasim we met some of the Chahar Lang Khans. They had prepared a great feast, and in between the black-hatted nobles we sprawled uncomfortably on the floor before huge trays of Kababs and pyramidal piles of Pillaus, yellow with saffron. But specially precious to memory were the little dishes of preserved fruits made by the Bakhtiari women-folk, so good that they elicited staccato exclamations of delight from the Russians, who know all there is to be known about jam.

Three days' discussion resulted in the drafting of an agreement, defensive and offensive, but as it was about to be signed, a cipher telegram arrived by special messenger. The Russian Legation, it appeared, wished me to make no compact with the Chahar Lang, as they were included in the ' Russian sphere ' ! For this futility I had to thank the Archimandrite, who always suspected my objects. Following on this, Khoren declared he had news of a gathering of hostile tribesmen who had planned to surround us that very night, and nothing could prevent the Russian commander from saddling up there and then



and marching straight off, without a halt, to Sultanabad.

As things turned out, it was lucky we did so. Nearing the town early in the morning, tired, hungry and cold, we heard firing and learnt that an attack was being made. I went on to see Moir, whom I found packing up and closing his warehouses, and then rode out with my two Indian sowars. The Russians were occupying, with a very thin line, the crest of an irregular chain of low hills outside the town, on which their black figures were visible. With the exception of a small reserve with the guns, every available man was engaged. Leaving my horse with the sowars, I climbed up to where a Cossack was firing over a rock and then dropping back to reload his magazine. The enemy were within 150 yards of him. Almost immediately one of my sowars shouted to me to come back. A spur ran from the centre of the Russian position towards the town, from which a considerable party of the enemy had pushed the Russians back and were now firing into our rear. Farther back, on the same spur, a small group of Russians were opposing this outflanking movement. We scrambled down and rejoined the scattered line, now making a rather disorganised retirement across the plain under a brisk fire. A body of Bakhtiari horsemen, led by a Khan, suddenly emerged from the hills and galloped across the plain at their base, evidently meaning to get behind the Russians on the spur. The Cossacks near me began firing at the tribesmen, but their shooting was astoundingly bad. I had the rifle of a Russian casualty and took a shot at the Khan, lying down and swinging well ahead. To the joy of the Cossacks, his horse came down, but the rider jumped up behind another and the party went galloping back the way they had come into the hills. The retiring Russians now took up a fresh line under cover, and both sides kept up a long-

range fire, till a shell from one of the baritone's guns burst near a group on a skyline, supposed to be the enemy's staff. The enemy then broke off the attack and retired—or maybe it was time for their *nahr* (mid-day) meal.

I rode back with an officer who had just arrived to take over the Partizanski column, Bicharakoff. Those who met him afterwards on the Mesopotamian front will remember the slight figure, very much buttoned up in Cossack uniform with silver accoutrements, the limp from an old wound, the rather Mongolian face, lit up at times by a whimsical and very charming smile. Bicharakoff was a lonely, silent individual, a different type from the usual rather roystering Cossack officer; but his kindness and bravery made him popular with everyone who had no cause to fear him. He was a good horseman and horsemaster, and his ambition for those halcyon days that were to arrive 'after the war' was to learn in England all there was to be learnt about racing stables, and then, in his own country—. Few discerned at that time the import of the black clouds that were fast gathering over poor Russia.

After that day attacks on Sultanabad became quite frequent, but they were certainly carried out in a very reasonable manner. They began not too early in the morning and were generally over in time for afternoon tea. Moir and I would be at breakfast: eggs, Persian bread and honey, the latter in cocoon-shaped cones, brought in on the branch to which they were clinging, so pretty, it seemed shameful to mangle them. Enter silently that Mohammed who had sent so many imaginary Turks to hell on our arrival. Now, standing at the door, his collar open, his legs twisting limply beneath him, haggard, unshaved, he would gasp but one word, "*Jang!*" (War!). Then we would go to the door and hear firing outside the town. The enemy consisted of tribesmen, and Persian *gendarmes* with



a backing of Turks. It was a primitive, almost childish type of warfare, but I felt sorry for the wounded, whether in the field or in the hospital. It was not till later that the Princess Lieven joined the Partizanski force to take charge of the ambulance. In her Cossack costume she was a striking figure, and as capable as beautiful. We lay one morning along a low ridge, returning the fire of the enemy on the skyline some 600 yards away. A Cossack galloped up with an order that was probably misunderstood. A party of thirty or forty formed up under cover and then went 'over the top,' advancing at a slow run across the intervening valley. spurts of dust sprang up all round them. One man fell, then another, but all-encumbered as they were with their long boots, knapsacks and tight uniforms, they trotted steadily on. They covered 100 yards or so, took cover and then on again. One or two more men fell and then they trotted steadily back again. The wounded on the ground were shot at till they ceased to move.

At this time Moir and I gave up living in the Ziegler house, which was on the exposed side of the town, and went into a caravanserai near the Russian headquarters, whence, if a retirement did take place, we could reach the Kum road without having to fight our way through the bazaar, for the Russian occupation was exceedingly unpopular.

The position improved in November, when an infantry regiment marched in. We all went out to meet them. The poor beggars raised a song for the last few hundred yards, but looked, as they were, inexpressibly weary and sick of the war in this distant land. With their support, however, Bicharakoff brought off a raid in real Cossack fashion. A long night march, a surprised village, sabre work, no firing. Back by noon next day, with a bag of prisoners, the Cossacks carrying in front of them on their saddles, with shouts of uproarious joy, their loot and two

small brass guns. Propaganda had in the meantime produced a change in the orientation of some, at least, of the neighbouring chiefs. The Sardar Hashmat marched into Sultanabad and placed his bemused but influential self, with 200 horse, at my disposal, a gesture that had its effect on others. I received another welcome addition in twenty Indian sowars under a Risaldar from that fine regiment, the Scinde Horse. They had been sent up from Mohammerah, through Persia, to be the British Consular Escort at Kermanshah; for in the anomalous state of affairs then existing in Persia, the position of my humble self was not the least curious. I was at once a 'Political' under the C.P.O. in Mesopotamia, a Levy Commander under Bicharakoff, and H.M. Consul for Kermanshah under our Minister at Teheran; unofficially, a few more things besides.

As Consul I used to hoist the British flag when with Russian troops, a practice objected to by Persians, and by Russians, at different times, and for widely differing reasons. It was irregular, but useful—not in this land of topsy-turveydom, in the interests of British subjects, but in that of Persian subjects themselves. Persia, it must be remembered, was nominally a neutral country. In Sultanabad incidents between the occupying troops and the townspeople were frequent, for the former seemed already to have anticipated the Bolshevik slogan, 'To everyone according to his needs.'¹ A Cossack snatched a piece of cloth from an open shop and then cut down the protesting owner. Girls outside the town were outraged; one was murdered. The Karguzar (Foreign Department official) came to me

¹ In the matter of supplies, the Cossacks in Persia were apparently under a contract system rather like that of the old *silladari* cavalry regiments in India. As their allowances for the purchase of supplies had little relation to market rates and were very frequently in depreciated rouble notes, their position was, to say the least, difficult.



and I went to Bicharakoff. The latter listened, shrugged his shoulders—'*c'est la guerre*'—but did justice; not the justice we should have done in like circumstances, but justice of a kind. When subsequently on the move with Russian troops it was not unusual at night to hear dreadful cries arising from one quarter or another of an occupied town, marking the course of marauding Russians. At such places I used to see the caravanserai I was occupying fill up towards evening with Persians, who sought safety under the British flag. In the morning they crept silently—I hope gratefully—away. One old man, with his daughter's hand in his, certainly did, on leaving, look up long and earnestly at the flag over the gateway, and he raised his hand, but whether he was salaaming in gratitude or scratching his head in amazement, I did not know. In one town, called by a coincidence Qasri Shirin¹ (Palace of Sweetness), the Russians had impounded a big caravan of sugar without justification. The owner put himself under the British flag, and I was able to get it restored. To be sure, the entire consignment was looted the following night by Russian soldiers, but compensation was eventually paid. I was not always so successful. On the march we once came upon a long string of mules laden with piece-goods, chintzes and suchlike, on which the Cossacks pounced like birds of prey. The goods were said to be destined for the Turks and were impounded, but as there was much room for doubt, I had the stuff placed under a guard pending inquiries. In camp that evening a Cossack on guard over the pile of bales saw a bit of coloured cloth protruding and gave it a pull. Someone else gave it another pull; a hilarious crowd assembled, and in ten minutes not a vestige of the goods was left. The owner, or

¹ Actually so named after the favourite of the great King Khusrau Parwez, who lived a matter of 1300 years ago. The lady's name was Shirin or, if the impertinence may be forgiven, Lollipop.

rather the caravan-bashi, seeing his bales vanishing into thin air, had taken himself off. I must do Bicharakoff justice and say that the looting done by *his* men was inconsiderable, and offenders were punished. As for my own levies, bandits by birth and upbringing, the first cases of misbehaviour of this kind were dealt with severely, and none occurred afterwards, but it cost me their keenness to some extent, for, after all, with tribesmen the main incentive, apart from fanaticism, is always loot. Indeed, I doubt whether this kind of raw material could ever be used by British officers very successfully without some concession to their innate rapacity. My Indian escort, on the other hand, was a 'scratch' war-time lot from the bazaars of the North-West Frontier, and only those who know Pathans of that class can realise how bad they *can* be ; but discipline had been instilled into them in India and I never had a complaint of their behaviour, though they were subjected to many and great temptations. I do not doubt, however, that the tribesmen of Persia are, speaking generally, the equal of Pathans as military material. *But* they would require officers to train them of the type that has made our Indian Army.

Before Christmas I was called with Bicharakoff to Teheran to report the situation to our respective Legations. While we were there, Minorski, the Russian Chargé d'Affaires, suggested my taking over those Kurdish refugees whom I had previously encountered on the road to Kum. They were now on the Russian 'dole,' living a happy and contented existence in the mosque of Shah Abdul Azim, with the needful flask of wine, loaf of bread and, of course, 'Thou' ; an existence which they evidently hoped would continue till their enemies had been scattered and they could return to enjoy the fruits of victory. When they heard their Russian allowances had been stopped, they resigned themselves



to the inevitable: girded their loins, pulled their now fat horses out of the stable, and, 'bearing with them,' as a Persian would say, 'a provision of lamentations and regrets,' set forth on the road to Sultanabad. They stuck on their hats, however, with proper pride, some brass badges which, suitably inscribed with due regard to Persian national feelings, I had had made in Teheran as a distinguishing mark for my levies. My wife had met me at Teheran, and as Sultanabad was quiet for the time being, she accepted Bicharakoff's invitation to pay a visit to the front, and we three set forth in a car on the return journey. The driver, in what seemed to be a not unusual condition amongst his fraternity, after twice thinking the road took a sharp turn when in fact it went straight on, and emboldened, perhaps, by an absence of ill results, finally brought the car to a wrecked standstill over a small culvert. There was no means of sending an S.O.S., so we celebrated Christmas in an hotel we found at the side of the road, consisting of two mud rooms and a roof. A hamlet near-by produced the usual bread and eggs, but the only semblance to Christmas fare lay in a bottle of cognac, secreted for emergencies in someone's baggage, now brought forth with the observation, "We shall never want it more than we do now," to which the dismal cliffs around, not to speak of Bicharakoff and myself, echoed, "Never!" Next morning we were rescued by a passing lorry and taken on to Sultanabad, and there we did more Christmassing. A big dinner was given at the Ziegler house, attended by a General who had come for inspection and all the Russian officers in the place. Afterwards there were the usual speeches, songs and dances, but when Moir jumped up and crashed out on the piano the grand old Russian National Anthem, it was received in silence, and we saw around us the blank faces of men who did not know what was in each other's

minds. There was a review of the Partizanski, at which my catch-'em-alive-ohs, waving their rifles, passed the saluting point like a whirlwind. Whatever may be the merits or demerits of Persian tribesmen in other respects, no one who has seen them galloping with loose rein down the rocky sides of their own hills can deny that they are at least bold riders.

After Christmas there came a heavy snowfall, the Cossacks' opportunity, and Bicharakoff planned a surprise attack on Daulatabad. So my wife left again for Kazvin. I was not to see her again till, after an adventurous journey, she met me at Kermanshah four months later. With Cossacks, Indians and Kurds it was a queer irregular column that set forth over the white silent country. We spent a bitterly cold night in an empty village, where Bicharakoff and I shared the same room. Sleep was a thing he seemed to dispense with, and I have a recollection of many awakenings, at each one of which, in the small circle of light cast by a candle, I seemed to see a long outstretched arm always lighting a fresh cigarette. It was 3.30 A.M. when we turned out on to the hard crisp snow, and by the time the sun had lighted up white plains and mountains, Bicharakoff's guns were in action on the road, while dismounted Cossacks had occupied a high ridge commanding the town. My miscellaneous crowd was with the reserve. About mid-day Bicharakoff asked me to take my sowars over the ridge, with the idea of turning the Turks' left flank. We trotted forward and then led our horses up the rocky hillside, from the top of which the town, with its domed houses and walled gardens, could be seen a little more than half a mile distant. The ridge was a spur from a range to our right called Kuh-i-Surkh, which was crossed above the town by the Baba Rais Pass. After adding our fire to that of the Russians for a few minutes, we pulled our horses down the declivity, the officer commanding



on the ridge shouting furiously at me, though what his remarks were I had no idea. Then over the plain in extended order, coming under machine-gun and rifle fire. The Indian sowars came gaily along, the Persian levies, somewhat diminished in numbers, behind them. No one was hit till the scattered buildings outside the town were reached, when my Indian orderly was killed and a levy wounded. The Russians by then had begun to advance, and the enemy could be seen leaving the town. In half an hour we were in possession. The retiring Turks were pursued for two or three miles along the road and a good many casualties inflicted, chiefly by the baritone's guns, the latter in return getting a shell splinter in the leg.

In Daulatabad at last! I took up my quarters in a big caravanserai in the town, which soon became full of self-invited Persian guests—taking refuge from the Russians! Next day I called on the American missionaries, good people, somewhat overburdened with the consciousness of their neutrality. Then, having a very bad cold, with fever, I retired to my lodging, dosed myself with hot whisky and water and quinine, rolled myself in blankets and went to sleep. Confused dreams resolved themselves into the Risaldar standing over me and saying something about the Russians evacuating the town. Jumping up, I went on to the roof. It was evening, and flakes of snow were coming down, but still there was light enough to see with the glasses some black dots moving along the slopes of the hills towards the town. Firing was going on. I hurried into my uniform, threw my papers and things into my *yakdan*, and went out into the courtyard, where the Risaldar had loaded up the mules and was ready to start. As we passed through the bazaars not a soul was to be seen, the shops were shut and doors barred. Outside, the troops were on the move. I found Bicharakoff with difficulty, and he



told me his outposts had been driven in by the Turks, who had been strongly reinforced, and he had to retire. He was taking his column by the Baba Rais Pass, but was sending hospital and details back to Sultanabad by the low road through Zanganeh. I was to form a rearguard for the latter. So we started off. The pace was slow, as the track, covered with snow, was difficult to find in the dark. After going along for about an hour an officer whom I did not know rode back with an orderly. He looked at my Indians and Kurds and asked suspiciously, "Who are you?" To the average Russian the only good Kurd is a dead Kurd, and 'Hindis,' as they called my Indians, little better. I told him, and he grunted, "The enemy are in front; they are holding the defile by Zanganeh and we must follow the others." The head of the column turned round, hoping to find the road to the pass somewhere between the town and the steep ascent. Snow was then falling heavily; it was dark and we struggled blindly along, leading our horses and keeping a general direction by the intermittent firing on our left. By good luck we struck at last the track of the main column, and were shortly after challenged by Bicharakoff's rearguard. The snow got deeper as we toiled upward, but it had stopped falling, and we had glimpses of a moon that revealed to some extent the white desolation of hills and valleys around us. Doubts arose about the road, and little groups straggled here and there to find it. Now and then a man collapsed and was put across a saddle. We came on one or two from the main body who had sat down exhausted. At last we reached the top, where we found Bicharakoff and the column. They had dug themselves in, with the guns, which had been man-handled up the pass. There, freezing in the wind, we waited till the red dawn came up and we could look down the snowy stretches up which we had struggled. A black figure



far below was rescued, but there was no pursuit, and we started ignominiously down the far side. When the level was reached, my 'Hindis' explored a ruined hamlet and found some litter, with which they made a fire and some blessed hot tea. It was a hideous country—or so it seemed—streaked white and khaki, and the sickly beams of the sun warmed us little. At a group of villages Bicharakoff halted for the night, and we reached Sultanabad the next day. As for the cold and fever with which I had started that long night in the snow, it had been completely cured!

When the British took Baghdad, Ali Ihsan Pasha began his retreat from Hamadan. The Russians then had their opportunity, and if their military spirit had not been dead, the Turks would have had a difficult task in extricating themselves from Persia. As it was, they carried out an orderly retirement by the main road which runs from Hamadan to Kermanshah, thence to Kerind, a few miles farther on to fall abruptly down to the plains of Mesopotamia. For 200 miles or more the Russians were content just to tread on their heels, so that history will not, I think, include Baratoff's name in the long roll of famous soldiers who have passed with their armies along that ancient highway. When Bicharakoff, on the Russians' left flank, had once again reached Daulatabad, the Turks had been gone two days and had joined the army retiring by the main road. From there I pushed ahead, marching through the hills by Nehavand, with the hope of sniping their convoys near Kermanshah. The snow on the high ground, however, made my proposed route impassable, so I turned right and came up with Baratoff's advanced cavalry on the main road where it crosses the famous plain of Bisitun.

One might imagine shadowy hosts of Elamites, Medes and Parthians, Scythians, Tartars and Mongols looking down on the scene and marking but little

change since they, too, marched along the highway from Ecbatana to Babylon. The same grassy plain, yellow under the setting sun, now, as many a time before, alive with picketed horses and armed men—some of them, perhaps, their very own descendants—the smoke of camp fires rising to form misty strata in the still air, the river wandering away in loops and turns till lost amid the purple Zagros mountains. A stone-built caravanseraï with its many crypt-like arches still stands darkly by the roadside. Overhanging all, a towering scarp of black rock, the rock on which Darius, the Mede, had caused to be chiselled his own gigantic figure, and, under his feet, those of his captive kings—kings, as the inscription runs, who had ‘said they were’ rulers of this country or of that and ‘had lied’!

The Russians were held up by the Turks at the Karasu River, the bridge over which had been blown up. I found Colonel Perapelovski, in command of the advanced cavalry, on the roof of a hamlet, whence he was examining the Turkish position on the far side. That night a Cossack regiment made an attempt to cross the river some distance higher up, but the Turks were on the alert and they were repulsed with considerable loss. As morning broke it was seen that the Turks had again retired, and the Russians marched into Kermanshah unopposed. We were met outside by a crowd of Persian officials and notables. The British Consulate was in flames. It had been used as a hospital, and, judging by the indescribable state of its surroundings, including a Turkish cemetery where some two hundred or more corpses lay half exposed or covered by a bare sprinkling of earth, its destruction by fire was certainly a sanitary measure. The Gumbaz over the remains of an English lady who had died in Kermanshah some years before had been searched for treasure, but not otherwise desecrated. As usual, supplies were the Russians’ chief difficulty. In Kermanshah they



were short, and along the road by which the Turks were leaving Persia there was famine. Radatz, commanding the Cossack division, arrived the following day. I met him and his staff clattering down a steep cobbled alley, Kermanshah's Piccadilly, at a canter, scattering the Persian crowd. He was beautifully mounted and altogether a striking figure. Poor Radatz was afterwards killed by mutineers. The plan he then sketched out for me and my levies was to keep well to the left of the main road by which the Russians would be marching, and passing through the Kalhur tribal country, to reconnoitre as far as Mandali, in Mesopotamia, collecting any supplies I could get and sending them to the Russians. I started off next morning.

Famine conditions prevailed to a greater or less extent on each side of the main road according to the difficulties of the country and the nature of its inhabitants. The villages had been stripped, but nomad tribesmen had been able to look after themselves. Some few stores, however, which had been concealed successfully from the Turks were opened for me. It was not that the unfortunate owners had a surplus, but they preferred to have gold which they could bury, rather than hoard foodstuffs which they knew would be looted sooner or later. Near one big village in a plain west of Kermanshah was a *tapa*, one of those tumuli that attract the archæologist's eye. Standing on its top, the *katkhuda* of the village told me how, a few days previously, from that very spot, he had heard the continuous reverberation of guns from the west, a sound inaudible in the village, or anywhere else on the plain. From this he alone had guessed that Baghdad had indeed fallen, and so—'before Allah'—he had saved his grain for us instead of selling it to the Turks! If his story was true, as may be assumed, since his dates were correct, it constitutes an acoustic curiosity, for Maude's guns must have been more than a hundred and twenty miles distant.

We entered the savage and romantic country of the Kalhurs, a maze of rocky ridges, many clothed with the evergreen oak which is so common a feature in these parts. Its acorns, made into bread, prolonged—before finally ending—the lives of many famine-stricken people in villages near the road. I was met by Suliman Khan, a young man with shifty eyes and an unpleasant smile, who till now had been chief of the 'opposition' faction, with a large body of horse. These dark-robed ruffians were well mounted and, in a fashion, picturesque, though on their little nags, with their huge bulbous hats like inverted cooking-pots, they gave an impression of top-heaviness. One in front flaunted a flag, a weird imitation of the Union Jack. Like all his class, a Vicar of Bray by instinct and conviction, it was likely that Suliman Khan had with him the flags of at least three other nationalities to produce on appropriate occasions. If it is true that most human beings have their affinities among the lower creatures, both in appearance and character, it struck me then and afterwards, that it would not be doing these Kalhurs great injustice to liken them to a flock of hoodie-crows.

We exchanged greetings and congratulations and proceeded. The rival chieftain, Abbas, who till that day had been top dog, was believed to be somewhere in the neighbourhood, and that evening there was a crackle of rifle fire among the oak forests; but it seemed to be a parting salute, for the next I heard of Abbas was that he had gone to Aiwan to take refuge with another ruler of the marches, the Wali of Pusht-i-Kuh, 'Lord of Beyond the Mountain.' The latter was a chieftain who had some reputation as an important but somewhat incalculable factor in local war-time politics. He had certainly accepted gold from the Germans, as a return for which he had denied to the British the direct road from Ali Gharbi, in Mesopotamia, to Kermanshah, which led



through his country. He had also obliterated a party of Cossacks that had tried to pass that way earlier in the war without a 'by your leave'; but this, perhaps, was as much due to the independence of spirit proper to a 'Lord of Beyond the Mountain' as to anything else. On the credit side he had sent no contingent to join the Turks, and later on a big consignment of pig-sticker helmets sent, 'a present from India,' for Baratoff's troops was allowed to pass through his country by native convoy, after considerable delay. And a very remarkable appearance they gave the wearers, too!

In the evening we came to Gilan, a big village whose inhabitants, supporters of the rival Khan, had melted away. One wretched individual found removing his chattels was felled by a blow from a rifle-butt, which, had I not intervened, would then have been dropped on his head. The next day was occupied in hunting for supplies. In the evening I joined the Khan, who was sitting drinking tea with some of his people in the courtyard of the house in which he lodged, to witness a little incident characteristic of the country. A man, haggard and emaciated, came in and sat himself abjectly on the fringe of the company, his hands clasped in front of him, his dull eyes fixed on vacancy. "*A tiryaqi*"¹ (opium addict), someone said, "he has no opium." One of the tea-drinkers of a sympathetic nature produced a tin box, extracted a lump of opium as big as a filbert and put it into the outstretched hand

¹ The etymology of the word *tiryaq*, now used in Persia for opium instead of the classical *afun*, is interesting, particularly as it is the same as that of our 'treacle.' *Theriake* signified in Greek a very special decoction of snakes in wine, used as an antidote for snake-bite. The science of medicine in the East as well as its vocabulary largely came from Greece. Hence Sadi's often quoted lines:—

Ta tiryaq az Iraq amad
Mar gazida talaf shud.

Before the *tiryaq* could arrive from Iraq,
The snake-bitten one had perished.

of the *tiryaqi*, who bolted it as quickly as de Quincey's Malay. 'O just, subtle and mighty opium! / Thou hast the keys of Paradise!' In the space of a few minutes his face seemed to have filled out, his eyes grew bright and, rising to his feet, with the resonant sing-song enunciation of the Persian reciter he began to declaim verses from Hafiz. How long he would have continued I cannot guess. The Khan brusquely said "Go," and he went, and we heard his voice die away along the empty street.

From Gilan I marched with my fellows to Somar on the Persian side of the Mesopotamian frontier, sleeping in encampments, pleasantly situated near running water. Sleep should have been sweet on those deep mattresses of odorous twigs had I not by some hideous fatality forgotten the tin of insect powder which is the first essential of Eastern travel.

The women and children in these encampments were not bad-looking, having a gipsy-like picturesqueness, due chiefly, perhaps, to the combination of dark hair and eyes with silver ornaments. In any case, they could hardly be mistaken for anything but the wives and offspring of Oriental banditti.

We marched in no sort of order, with a few scouts thrown out in front. Suliman Khan was always wanting to stop to give the horses a few mouthfuls of grass, as grain was scarce; and then they would produce tea-things and begin rifle shooting. Anything was good enough to shoot at—a distant crow, a white stone on the hillside, and if some of his people happened to be near—even very near—that was their own look-out. The stone would be split by a bullet, then the half would be split and so on. They always begged me to shoot, and I was fortunately able to hold my own, though they pulled on a mark a trifle more quickly than I did. The 'Ashair' hereabouts were mostly armed with British or Turkish rifles sold them by the Arabs. The price of the former had



dropped after Kut; they were, indeed, cheaper than the Turkish rifles, for which ammunition was easier to get and whose longer barrels were preferred. No wonder game was scarce. And this in a country that in old times teemed with wild sheep, deer and lions! Often I put up my glasses to spy a distant hillside, but never saw a horned beast. Once a hare jumped up in front of our crowd, and immediately forty or fifty horsemen were galloping in wild pursuit, firing from their saddles. The hare doubled about, sometimes back among the horses' feet; but the firing went on just the same. For my own reputation I felt constrained to join in the chase, so drew my revolver and sincerely hoped I was as dangerous as anybody else. At the same time, I was vastly relieved when the unfortunate hare finally met a bullet. It occurred to me afterwards how nice it would be to present to the chief a Persian rendering—suitably illustrated and illuminated—of the well-known lines beginning:—

“ Never, never let your gun
Pointed be at anyone,”

which he could hang up in his gun-room—or opium den.

As we neared the Perso-Mesopotamian frontier, the hills subsided, and we could see in the distance the walls of Mandali, and, above them, for the first time, the dark-green tops of date palms. When the Turkish garrison began firing at us at long range, Suliman Khan rode up to me, pale with excitement. “ Sons of burnt fathers, we Kalhurs will take the town,” he cried, waving his rifle above his head. I replied, unthinkingly, “ Bismillah,” and immediately the whole cavalcade began charging across the plain. What they imagined they were going to do I had not an idea. What they did do, after one man had come down, was to turn round and gallop in the

opposite direction, so that my Indians were the only ones left in this comical charge. So we, too, turned about, for, after all, in the best military circles a walled town is not generally considered a suitable objective for cavalry. Suliman Khan then took up a position with his men under cover of some rising ground, and, at a range of twelve hundred yards or more, opened a terrific fire on the town, which nothing I could say or do could induce him to stop or even to moderate. After about ten minutes it slackened, then stopped, and he came up to me with the air of one who had nobly done his duty, and the following conversation took place—

“What shall we do? We have no more cartridges.”

“No more cartridges!”

“No, Agha; not a single cartridge remains. They have been expended in your service. What shall we do now?”

“After this desperate battle,” I said, “you surely deserve to go to your homes.” The sarcasm was lost on him.

I marched back to the road with the supplies I had been able to collect and found the Russians at Sarmil, east of the Pai Taq Pass, where the valley narrows and the Turks had entrenched themselves. Firing was continuous, but the Russians were capable of no real effort. The men were on short rations and their horses starved on oak leaves. A suggestion I had previously made that a column should be sent through the hills by Gilan to intercept the retreating Turks at Saripul was now accepted, and I was promised that a Cossack regiment would follow me the next day if I would return to Gilan and reassemble the Kalhurs. I left the same day by a reputed short-cut. Short it was, but difficult; at one point we had to ease our horses by their tails down a 500-foot staircase of rock. My haste, however, was unnecessary, as next day at Gilan I got news that the Turks had again retreated and had



reached Kasr-i-Shirin. The day following they had left Persian territory, and the Russian effort, such as it was, ended.¹ The Russian commander could, indeed, attempt no more than to maintain his long line of occupation from Enzeli on the Caspian to the Mesopotamian border, and this he managed till the end of the year. The story of the intervening period in the provinces with which I was concerned was one of constant harassment of the Russians by Kurdish tribesmen, punitive raids, in which the former often suffered more than the tribesmen, efforts at conciliation and conferences resulting in floods of oratory but little else, desperate difficulties for supplies and money, and, above all, steadily increasing trouble with their own troops, who gathered, open-mouthed, to listen to the revolutionaries who perambulated the districts in carts with their red flags. The countryside was in a shocking state. A traveller along the main caravan road would have seen shells of villages, fields lying waste and the corpses of those who had been killed, or had died of starvation, lying unburied. Supplied with funds by the civil authorities in Baghdad, I was enabled to start the realignment of the road as a relief work, and some wretched remnants of the inhabitants began to drift back to the villages. But the damage had been done. From this derelict country the disorganised Russian troops slowly dribbled away on their trek back to the Caspian. Only the gallant Bicharakoff, with a handful of Cossack volunteers, refused to desert, and begged for permission, which

¹ A letter from General Maude is thus quoted in Colonel Repington's 'First World War': "The 13th Turkish Army Corps, which was retiring before the Russians, is, however, a different proposition, as they are quite unbroken and have some good regiments. The Russians are moving along in a very leisurely manner and effected a junction with us a few days ago near Khanekin, but apparently they mean to do little or nothing more in this direction at present. . . . The idea of their Commander, Radatz, is, apparently, that his mission is completed now that he has chased the Turks out of Persia."

was granted, to join our troops in Mesopotamia. I accompanied him as far as Mandali, arranging for an unopposed passage and supplies from my Kalhur friends. As I said good-bye to him on the frontier he pinned on my coat his own Cross of St Vladimir, with which he had been decorated at the hands of the Grand Duchess Olga.

With the arrival of British troops in Persia, a new and happier chapter opened.

XIII.

RECOLLECTIONS OF NEPAL.

LONG usage has invested the arrival of a new Envoy at the Court of Nepal with a ritual which begins from the very moment when he emerges from the dusty 'special' at the Raxaul terminus. Here we were met by a crowd which included a smart young Gurkha officer, in mufti but wearing the forage cap of authority, henceforth to be 'the Nepalese attaché,' of whom it need only be said that he was perfect—even as Viceregal A.D.C.'s are perfect. He was the forerunner of a succession of emissaries of progressively increasing rank sent to meet us at different stages of the journey before us, all bearing messages of welcome from the Maharaja. From this point, separated from the capital by some hundred miles of forest and mountain, the manner of the Envoy's progress is decreed by custom from which deviation is only permissible in minor details. On the road through the Terai forests, for instance, we could travel as we felt disposed, prosaically by car, actively on horseback, lazily by *palki*, or picturesquely on elephants. Possibly had we known it, the choice before us was even wider. When a strong posse of keepers from the Calcutta Zoo arrived at Raxaul with chains and tackle to take over a rhinoceros presented by the Maharaja, they were surprised and doubtless relieved to see the beast sauntering up to the station in charge of a single attendant, who was riding on his back. If we had expressed a preference that way, it is possible that three rhinos of un-

exceptionable manners would have been placed at our disposal.

As it was, we elected to send the horses on for subsequent stages and begin with a night's journey by *palki*, a mode of travel that belongs to an India that has almost disappeared. The smooth movement, the shuffle of bare feet, the sing-song of the bearers, the procession of trees gliding by, wafts of jungle incense, the dance of fireflies, the gleam of eyes, whiffs of hookah smoke—delightful perhaps for one night, how wearisome such incidents must have become to the poor memsahibs who in the old days used to travel in this way the length and breadth of the continent. And yet—the English men and women who spent their lives in the India of those times may perhaps be accounted the most fortunate.

At Bimphedi, some fifty miles from the frontier, the road turns to wriggle up the sun-scorched face of a mountain too steep for horse or elephant, and here no choice of conveyance was allowed—or desired. Three capable hill ponies awaited us, on which, with both hands buried in their flowing manes, we were borne upwards. At the top we passed through the gateway of a small fort, where a guard did the honours with Gurkha smartness. Going outside with my wife and daughter after tea, we looked down over the country through which we had passed: the green sea of the Terai, a miasmic belt of swamps and jungle, the haunt of elephant, tiger and rhinoceros; the zone of *sal* forest called Bhawar, and nearest below us a tangle of contorted, torrent-riven, sandstone ridges. It was in this difficult country that the Nepalese wars of 1814-16 were fought. After the peace of Sagauli our late gallant foes became what they still remain, perhaps the sincerest friends we have anywhere. At this point it was a Colonel of the Nepalese army who met us with greetings from the Maharaja, and he, too, turned about to accompany us.



Next day we plunged down to the Markhu River, and, after passing the night in one of the State rest-houses, ascended the Chandragiri Pass, from which there bursts on the traveller one of the world's most wonderful views. It might be likened to a titanic bowl of green jade bound in silver. Far below lie the fertile plains of Nepal, and beyond, immensely high, a glittering rim, the backbone of the Himalaya and the boundary between the kingdom of the Gurkhas and Tibet. The track from here is an ancient rock staircase cut through the greenery that clings like a mantle to the mountain—forest trees, rhododendrons, ferns, orchids and countless forms of Himalayan vegetation struggling with one another for existence. The steps were worn and smooth, so that horses and even elephants, who are better climbers than any of the equine species, are sent a longer and easier route. At one point their slipperiness was enhanced by what looked like a mass migration of worms, passing on a broad front in an east to west direction. What was the explanation of this queer phenomenon, which seemed like the meaningless incident of a dream, I have not an idea. At the foot of the pass a carriage awaited my wife and daughter, who abandoned me to carry out my part of the 'arrival.' A tent pitched on smooth undulating turf amid the orchards of red-roofed Thankot first received me, in which I cast aside travelling clothes to emerge like a butterfly (of sorts) in full dress. There followed in another tent a prolonged wait, which the attaché, assisted by a table loaded with fruits, tea and cigarettes, abbreviated with the skill of his kind. The next event was the appearance of a State carriage with a mounted escort, from which emerged a Nepalese General, a wonderful vision in those sylvan surroundings. Scarlet, gold, epaulettes, aiguillettes, decorations, and topping all an incredible casque with a sweeping plume that—shall I say 'once'?—belonged to a Bird

of Paradise. He was General Baber Shamsheer Jang, who had been the capable and popular Inspector-General of the Nepalese troops in India during the war. It was his duty, he told me, to bring me to the reception—and apparently at the right moment precisely, for as we sat down he put his watch on the table. He spoke English extremely well, and could talk about anything—except Nepal. I afterwards came to know that for Nepalese officials (except the Maharaja) to discuss with the Envoy any matter that had the very remotest connection with his official duties was taboo. One little remark of his, and quite a characteristic one, may be quoted, though to appreciate it one must picture the speaker; features suggesting a Central Asian ancestry, the jewels, the plumes. In some connection our English county of Dorsetshire had been mentioned. “Ah,” he murmured, “Hardy’s county!”

‘Zero’ was the General’s word to move. As our carriage approached Khatmandu, one of the strangest cities on earth, guns on an eminence flashed and boomed. Presently we were in an open space, round which sightseers formed a living wall. Before a big durbar tent a guard of honour called for inspection, and as this was finished the Maharaja appeared at the entrance with outstretched hand. I will say something about him later. Here I was merely aware of a smallish figure encased in an English-cut uniform of extreme magnificence, his breast covered with decorations; a head-dress unique in the world, its foundation completely hidden by diamonds, pearls, rubies and emeralds of a size and lustre that would have caused the Great Mogul himself to ‘bite the finger of envy with the teeth of astonishment.’ Indeed, if his ghost had been there, he might have recognised some of his own jewels! The face framed in these marvellous gems indicated the high-caste Hindu, but under the fringe of emeralds that hung low on his forehead, the eyes



were dreamy, as of a *rishi* of caves and forests. In a Passion play he would have been cast for the Christos. The effect of these incongruities was heightened when he spoke in nearly perfect English, and by his simple direct manners and delightful smile.

As we walked up to the end of the tent, a line of uniformed figures, all Generals, stood up, criers cried and the band played. The Maharaja then took me along the bejewelled, beplumed lines, and beginning with the brother who succeeded him, introduced each individual in turn. I was to know many of these interesting people later. Here they were automata, each one extending a stiff hand with a face expressionless as that of a guardsman on parade. The conventional inquiries and talk over, I took my leave, and with two Generals was driven off to the Legation, which reached and my companions departed, I could throw off my uniform and look around me.

I have used the term 'Envoy,' but as a matter of fact I arrived in Nepal a 'Resident' and left an 'Envoy.' The change was made after the war as a sort of special confirmation of our recognition of the country's independence. Strictly speaking, the term 'Resident' has not the implied significance, for in E.I.C. days it was used for the British Agents accredited to the then independent courts of India. Yet since the term is still in use in India, it was desired to emphasise the fact that the status of the Gurkha kingdom is of a totally different kind to that of any of the 'protected' States. With the same idea, the Maharajdhiraj, the titular King of Nepal, was then for the first time addressed as 'Your Majesty,' and the Maharaja (the hereditary Prime Minister and real ruler) as 'Your Highness.'

The first thing that strikes the new-comer's wandering eye on entering the Legation is a board in the hall bearing the names of all his predecessors, beginning with Captain Knox in 1802. Perhaps the

most famous name on the roll is that of Brian Hodgson, who was here for nearly twenty years. Practically everything that is known about the ethnology, zoology, archæology, as well as the languages and religions of Nepal, is the result of his labour, and this notwithstanding ill-health that made service in India impossible for him. It may, of course, be that his energies were thus directed not in spite of but because of his bodily frailty. If, for instance, he had been able to travel, instead of having 'discovered' various beasts and birds he might merely have shot them. Hodgson's works are treasured by themselves in a glass-fronted case in the Legation library.

Following Hodgson, Major Lawrence, afterwards Sir Henry, of Mutiny renown, was Resident from '43 to '46, a stormy period in Nepal which brought to the front the famous Jang Bahadur. After the suppression of the Indian Mutiny, in which the Nepalese ruler played a notable part, the Nana Sahib, the infamous author of the Cawnpore massacres, disappeared into the jungles of Nepal. The threads of the subsequent story, including the negotiations between the Resident, Colonel Ramsay, and Jang Bahadur for his capture and surrender, have been drawn together in the late Percival Landon's 'Nepal,' which probably gives as complete an account as will ever be written of this 'unsolved mystery of Asiatic history.' Coming to later times, Colonel 'Jack' Manners Smith, who gained the V.C. at Nilt, found Nepal pleasant enough to stay for eleven years. His incumbency will perhaps be remembered chiefly for his efforts to get the young princes to play polo on their wonderful *maidan*. The Nepalese, however, are not horsemen—though one might get a different impression from some of their equestrian statues—and so far have not fallen victims to the games epidemic. So he was not successful. Another thing



that will perpetuate the Manners Smiths' memory was the sight of their pretty children riding—not riding on—elephants, an art that does not come easily to English people, for to do it properly it is necessary to bestride the great neck, use his neck ropes as stirrups—between the big and second toes—guide him by kicks and control him by a nice conduct of the elephant goad, not omitting the appropriate Nepalese expletives. No wonder they are still talked of! Indeed, it is not impossible that a century or two hence they will have attained their apotheosis among the more presentable members of the Nepalese pantheon.

The British enclave includes a medical officer's house and garden, lines for the escort (a specially enlisted body of horse and foot), a parade ground, offices, a school, a visitor's bungalow and a sparsely populated cemetery. The Envoy's house looks rather like a Swiss hotel, and has been called by Landon 'unfortunate, undignified and unworthy of our representative.' We found it delightful. The garden, evidently laid out by one who loved trees and flowers, is bounded on one side by a little park. On the other the ground drops steeply down, opening out a view of distant wooded hills and white temples, often enough obscured by rain that shut us in like a blanket. One can hardly think of that garden without the vision arising of a *lagerstroemia*, a towering mass of vivid pink blossom. Nowhere else do these trees grow so big. The memory of a tall pine near the front door is less pleasant, for one day a fir cone big as a football and heavy as wood fell close to me. I meditated the tree's execution, but as there were but three of the projectiles left, I thought they might safely be left at the disposition of Providence. Running in the grounds we had two young hog deer—an ugly name for so pretty a beast—which my daughter had brought up from the Terai. Also a cheetal hind, which mothered

DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN POLITICAL

them. One day we were brought a flying squirrel, which was liberated as soon as it got tame. He generally lived in an empty studio over the billiard-room, and sitting at meals in the deep verandah we could hear his flop, flop across the floor, and presently he would be sitting on the verandah rail or on our shoulders, his long bushy tail over his head, accepting nuts and fruit. The marvel was to see him plane from one tall tree to another, his furry cloak outstretched, giving him the shape of a pegged-out panther skin. Our Tibetan mastiffs could hardly be called 'pets.' The dog was a magnificent animal, and later, when we went with the Maharaja to Calcutta, he got a first for Eastern breeds in the dog show, and was second 'best dog in the show.' The judge confided to me that—regarded as 'dog-flesh'—Jung was superlative, but he dared not face exhibitors of champions in our English breeds if he put the great hairy foreigner in front of them. We thought of taking a pair home to establish the breed in England, but they were aggressive wild beasts, and I imagined that no insurance office would accept 'third party risks' so far as they were concerned. They were eventually included in a present of animals made by the Maharaja to the Prince of Wales, but both of them died on the journey to the London Zoo.

An idea used to be current in India that the British representative in Nepal was a sort of State prisoner, hardly allowed to move outside the Legation. It had as a foundation the fact that most of the hill country, the land of the Gurkha people, has always been, and still is, closed to all Europeans, missionaries, propagandists and agitators. This is the Nepal Government's old-established policy, which, whether it has one's sympathy or not, is easy enough to understand. What the reply would be if the Envoy asked for facilities to travel in these districts is a question that does not arise, for it is impossible



to imagine anyone in his position, knowing the Nepalese policy, making such a request. Round the central valley there are any number of interesting and beautiful places that may be freely visited, each one the home of myth and legend, old as those of Greece and Rome, but, unlike them, still alive. In the cold weather, by the courtesy of the Nepal Government, the Envoy is free to pitch his camp and wander over the whole of the low country, perhaps the most wonderful virgin forests and shooting grounds in the world.

On one of the spurs of the mountains which encircle the valley the Envoy has a bungalow, to which we used to retire when Khatmandu grew hot. The ridge, called Kakani, is only some 6000 feet high, but even in the Himalayas there can be few places commanding such prospects. North and east the icy sierras stretch in an unbroken line, Everest itself visible from near-by, though indistinguishable from many other giants. Looking from our bungalow towards these vast mountains, on the very edge of the cliff a single tall cactus, planted by nature, stood out starkly against the blue gulf of air that lay between. In the opposite direction you look down on the valley of Khatmandu like a map in relief, and realise the truth of the legend that it was once a sheet of water. But of that nothing remains but the glitter of meandering rivers. When the morning mists lie low, the valley becomes once more a lonely lake among the mountains, with headlands and wooded islets. A breath of wind, the veil is torn, and through the rents you see the cities of the plain and catch the gleam of gold-roofed temples.

Medio de fonte leporum—there was little temptation to explore about Kakani, as the jungle was at that time of year infested by leeches. One saw them stretching out from the branches to catch the wayfarer as he passed. They wormed themselves into the eyelets of boots, the spaniel's eyes.

Once when a gorged leech fell plop to the ground in the verandah, a servant ran and brought a pinch of salt which he dropped on the creature, causing its immediate dissolution. After that we used to soak socks, putties, &c., in strong brine, which was a more effective protection than plate armour. Our exercise was in consequence mostly taken on the nine-hole course, for ripples from the great flood of golf had reached even this remote spot. Along our hog's back—and a lean hog at that—was a little course with little greens. The longest hole could be reached with a mid-iron, but if the ball did not come to rest on the green it was likely to go a very long way; and that is why, when we were playing, there stood on every prominent hillock a sentinel from H.M. Indian Forces. I hasten to explain that fore-caddying did not come within the duties of the Legation escort, but in this bazaarless spot it was a diversion for which there was always an excess of volunteers. A mutual arrangement. They were useful in finding balls, and our efforts doubtless caused them some innocent mirth. One day on the north slope of the ridge, within a mashie shot of the third tee, a panther made a meal of a villager's heifer; and when I sat up next day over a tethered goat, the killer, in broad daylight, a long yellow form, came gliding down the hill with incredible swiftness, so that before I could shoot he had taken the goat a dozen yards down the hillside. I shot him—too late from the goat's point of view—and the body was sent on a stretcher to Khatmandu with a message to the Subadar of the escort to get him skinned. His reply ran as follows: "Honoured Sir, received your kind order. I have ordered the *mochi* to take out the skin very carefully, and *mochi* is doing in the same way. I am much pleased that you have received the prey, as no one has ever found such sort of hunt at that place. My best compliments to you and to your all family members."

On the opposite side of the valley a grassy plateau lies between two rivers, where the Nepalese army have their rifle range. The Legation escort are allowed its use for their annual training, for which purpose an officer from a Gurkha regiment comes up every year, and we all used to have a camp there. That was *the* ideal spot for a national golf course. The conspirators were a celebrated doctor, who had come from London to treat the Prime Minister, and the Envoy's wife, a golfer of some renown. The Maharaja became convinced in short that the game would afford beneficial exercise and amusement for the young Generals. The course that came into being ran left-handed round the plateau, the deep water-worn chasms on its edge providing plenty of hungry bunkers. A professional arrived from one of the Calcutta golf clubs, a young Bengali, bare-headed, bare-footed; in fact I seem to remember that most of him was bare. He announced that he was 'Caddy No. 1' at Tollygunge. He had an extravagant swing, which, for lack of firm anchorage, brought him up facing the opposite direction to that in which he had hit the ball, and this, I may say, was usually a long way. I do not think he stopped long enough to stamp his style on the Generals; indeed I came to doubt whether golf was likely to become a national pastime in Nepal. We did once come on a young Nepalese engaged in a little serious practice. He was on the tee of a short hole, a little pitch across a deep ravine. His costume was a rather unorthodox compromise between the practical and the ornamental; the former in respect of white cotton 'plus-fours' tucked into black stockings and a collarless evening shirt not tucked into anything at all, the latter in respect of yellow gloves and patent leather shoes. One attendant with boxes of balls stood behind; others could be seen below hunting for the balls he was gravely hitting one after the other into the abyss. Among other

peculiar things to be seen on that course, I have a recollection that about the fourth hole one used to become aware of the gaze of a gigantic pair of eyes above the level horizon. The explanation of this startling apparition was the existence of an ancient temple by the river, of which only the *toran* on which the faceless eyes were painted could be seen. A feature of these Buddhist eyes is that the centre of the eyelid has a downward curve, which, as an authority has said, gives them 'an aspect of meditation and detached watchfulness.' Everyone knows that it is unpleasant to a golfer to be looked at in this way. Anyhow, when a few holes farther on dark trees rose up and hid us from their scrutiny, it was with feelings of relief that we pursued our way.

A path through this belt of trees led down to a bridge over the Bagmatti, and was the nearest road for our ride to the Legation, but it was a way we came to avoid. From the cliff one looks down on Pashpatti Nath, a place that for the Nepalese may be called an ante-chamber to the next world. The river here disappears into a gorge. On the near side, half hidden among dark trees, stands a line of huge sarcophagi. On the opposite bank, connected by a veritable Bridge of Sighs, is a confused mass of shrines and temples, whose weird and fantastic exteriors are suggestive of dark mysteries within. The banks are revetted with many burning ghats, from which clouds of sickly smoke taint the air. Troops of half-tame monkeys add to the funereal and the macabre a touch of the grotesque. To this spot are brought all those whose end is near. The rich await death in hostels, the poor as best they may; but all alike when the moment approaches are laid with their feet in the sacred river, and so they pass without fear.

The psychological effect of being brought to Pashpatti Nath must make the journey there the equivalent of a funeral. Once started, recovery



must be extremely rare, in which connection I may perhaps tell of the escape of one of our Nepalese servants. Stricken with influenza, his case became so desperate that hope had been abandoned, and all had been made ready for the journey to Pashpatti Nath. As he was about to start, the lady of the house appeared, told him firmly that she forbade the whole thing; he must neither go to Pashpatti nor die, and finally, that if he did, he would get no more pay. The good fellow, who had never disobeyed an order in his life, did as he was told, recovered and went on cooking excellent dinners for us till we left Nepal.

Of His Majesty the King of Nepal it may be said that he neither reigns nor governs, but exists. Riding through the streets, we often met him on horseback on his way to or from some religious festival. Behind his escort were generally two or three carriage loads of Court ladies, looking, with their sleek black hair and painted faces, rather like pretty Japanese dolls. At State durbars, of which there was quite a sufficient number, one had a nearer view of the King. A boy of about fifteen, with an effeminate but not unpleasing face, on such occasions he was the chief figure seated on the red-and-gold throne in the great hall of the Hunaman Dhoka Palace; to his left the Commander-in-Chief, on the other side the Prime Minister, and on the latter's right the British Envoy; down the length of the hall civil and military officers of State, the whole a display of colour and jewels that could hardly be surpassed in these drab days. When the Envoy was present, English was spoken by all except the King, whose few words, generally prompted and inaudible, were repeated by the Commander-in-Chief to the Prime Minister, who passed them on to the Envoy. As prompted also he bowed or extended a flaccid hand. Regarded as a human being, one felt sorry for the boy, though doubtless his position carried with it compensations. Such ceremonies are

conducted in Nepal with the pomp and solemnity of a cathedral service. Only once I remember a pebble, so to speak, nearly causing an unseemly splash in the slow flow of the ceremonial river. My wife with others in the ladies' gallery noticed a face at a window, apparently belonging to a looker-on in the courtyard, which suddenly became convulsed by frightful contortions, accompanied by a pointing finger. An emerald of fabulous size had fallen from the King's parure and now lay close to the Envoy's foot. As the ceremony proceeded without interruption, the golden tip of a sword scabbard might have been observed to move almost imperceptibly along the floor till it reached the jewel, which it raked to safety under the Prime Minister's own chair. All was well. The tortured face relaxed.

The place that theatres, cinemas and so on occupy elsewhere, is taken in Nepal by religious festivals, of which, big and small, there are reputed to be as many as there are days in the year. One day we were given a balcony from which to view the procession of the Indra Jatra. It overhung an old, narrow, cobbled street, a vista of pagoda-shaped temples and high houses, every doorway and window and balcony of which was decorated by carving, or overlaid by richly embossed plates of brass and copper. In this city vacant spaces stand thick with images as a garden border with flowers. The very streets are populated by images, in stone and in metal, as a writer has said, 'artistic in design and bold in execution, though unfortunately sometimes of a most obscene character'; men and beasts and birds and chimeras, on the ground and against the sky. The route was densely packed with a many-coloured crowd in holiday attire. One side of the street was in black shadow; on the other the sun was reflected from innumerable points of burnished metal and from the golden plates of the women's head-dresses. Blue pigeons fluttered in the hot air.



Many of the women carried little earthen saucers of oil with lighted wicks—lamps of remembrance—which they set on the ground. Down this street of a dream a monstrous red-and-gold car, drawn with ropes by scores of men, came rocking like a ship at sea. Through the group of white-robed Brahmins standing on the car one could catch a glimpse of a pretty boy representing the deity, painted up and looking, for a god, desperately tired. Two other cars followed, one with a little girl in the place of honour. The long tail of this extraordinary procession was made up of a State carriage with the King and Prime Minister in full dress, a mounted escort, brass bands and finally battalion after battalion of modern troops in service khaki. The whole might have been a pageant of the church militant of Nepal, with the Prime Minister as Defender of the Faith.

Owing to religious restrictions there could be no such things as mixed dinner-parties in Nepal. Instead, the Maharaja gave evening receptions at the Singha Durbar Palace, well staged with cinemas, fireworks and suchlike. The picture I like to recall, however, is of another kind. The great marble hall with its fountains electrically illuminated in colours, crowded with resplendent uniforms, and in one corner, seated cross-legged on the floor with his back against a pillar and simply dressed in white, a young Indian singer. He was accompanied by a stringed instrument and a little drum, but had a tenor voice of wonderful quality and flexibility—‘a nightingale,’ as the Eastern figure goes, ‘of a thousand tongues.’ The ladies of the Nepalese Court, though not in strict purdah, used to entertain delightfully my wife and daughter in their own apartments.

A visitor to Nepal is apt to get the impression that much that he sees in the central valley, these durbars and receptions and palaces, the ropeway, electric light, motor-cars, statues, waterworks and

even libraries and schools are but a veneer, a superficial polish in the capital of a wild and savage country. But I think this a mistaken view. Khatmandu, with modern embellishments and conveniences existing alongside the fabric of the ancient religions of the country, is the property of every Gurkha, his pride and dream. With the introduction of Western mechanical novelties there is going on also the absorption—one may hope with some discrimination—of Western ideas, and from the centre these are slowly being diffused through the country. In this process the retired soldier from our Gurkha regiments takes an important part. The danger is that false ideas about progress should penetrate across the frontier from India to the detriment of this brave, docile and attractive people.

Our own entertainments took the form of garden parties; chairs and talk in the shade for the old and side-shows for the young. The tennis courts were popular with the Nepalese youth, who had evolved a peculiar but not ineffective style of their own. How distant the days when there was some faint shadow of truth in the amusing dictum quoted by von Rosen: "Pour bien jouer au tennis il faut être blond, Anglais et protestant!" The billiard-room was generally full—it was, at any rate, when at special request I played the Chief Counsellor of State. The experience of being defeated at billiards by a player clothed entirely in stiff cloth of gold must, I think, be unusual. Another 'side-show' was the miniature rifle range, very correctly run with an N.C.O. and men of the escort in the marker's butt. Once I was watching the shooting when the Commander-in-Chief came up, a big man with a fine presence. He announced his intention of having a few shots, and got into position. From behind I noticed a certain unsteadiness about the muzzle of his rifle. However, with his first shot he scored a bull. That was splendid, and I suggested that now

he had shown the young men how to shoot he should let some of them try. Not so, however, he would have his seven shots. I was delighted when his second shot was also a bull, and his third. In fact the great man scored a 'possible,' and amid a murmur of applause he got up and strolled away, evidently satisfied, but not surprised. The next day the officer who had been in the marker's butt happened to come to see me. As he was leaving, a thought struck me, and I asked, "Havildar ji, did the Commander-in-Chief really make all those bulls yesterday?" He turned, his mild brown eyes fixed on mine in pained surprise. "Sahib," he said after a pause, "if—*His Excellency—the Commander-in-Chief*—should not make bull's eyes, *who* then should make them?"

Should anyone inquire if, by chance, the Envoy has any work to do, I would reply that although it has been somewhat cynically said that for officers of the Political Department laziness is the surest means to promotion on the one side and popularity on the other, and Nepal, in particular, is by repute a comfortable bed on which to practise the gift, in actual fact I found there were plenty of official matters demanding attention. Here I will only mention two, and as briefly as possible. For many years the Government of Nepal has permitted the Indian military authorities to enlist Gurkhas sufficient to maintain some twenty battalions, the value of which both for active service and the preservation of internal order is notoriously second only to that of our British regiments. After discharge officers and men return to Nepal and scatter over the length and breadth of a country much of which is a wilderness of mountains with rudimentary communications. The distribution of their pensions is the Envoy's responsibility. Pensioners died, were untraceable, left widows—one or more—and orphans. There were conflicting claims and occasional cases of im-

personation. When living near, pensioners would sometimes call personally to draw their money, and it was a pleasure to meet these old warriors, dressed for the occasion in their faded green uniforms with their medals and orders, and to have a 'crack' about bygone frontier 'shows.' But these were the exception. After the war, to which Nepal sent every available man, pensioners became much more numerous and the problem more troublesome. That was one type of question that made laziness an ideal rather than an achievement. Another was of the political kind. Should Nepal be permitted to import through India arms *ad lib.* and machinery for making them? This issue has since been decided by the Government of India in the affirmative, and no doubt rightly; for whether regarded from the standpoint of justice or mere expediency, there could be no sense in denying to Nepal with her record a privilege allowed to Afghanistan with hers. The matter was certainly rather less simple than might appear from the bare comparison. There was the little matter of Tibet, Nepal's neighbour on the north. The two countries have fought one another in the past, and the fire of animosity still smoulders between them. Nepal, moreover, is a young nation, proud of her military record, and by no means disinclined to prove on her own behalf her efficient little army. Yet war between the two, with the possibility of appeal being made to some more formidable power in the background, is the last thing the Government of India would want. Incidentally it may be said that if the British nation were to commit the crime of offering to 'India' the poisoned cloak of complete independence, and 'India' were mad enough to accept it, both questions touched on would become things of a dead past. Pensioners would soon cease to exist, as in such conditions Nepal would be unlikely to continue to India the privilege of enlisting Gurkhas for an



Indianised army ; on the other hand it would no longer be towards the barren north that Gurkha generals would be turning their adventurous eyes, but in the opposite direction.

This sketch of our existence in Nepal must not be concluded without at least a brief reference to the great statesman who, after guiding the destinies of his country for eighteen years, came to his appointed end in November 1929. For the most treasured recollections I have of the country are of those evenings when Sir Chandra used to come over alone and sit in the garden and talk. In addition to an extraordinary charm of manner, he had a knowledge of affairs and a shrewd judgment that made his conversation as instructive as it was delightful. Considering the character of most of the old Nepalese rulers, cruel, ruthless and vindictive, the emergence of this benevolent and enlightened autocrat is indeed astonishing. There is now every reason to hope and believe that the new tradition that he set up will be followed by his successors, and that the good he did *will* live after him. Chandra looked on the trend of events in India with misgiving. He did not believe that progress is dependent on a democratic form of government. The agitation for Home Rule was not, he often said, spontaneous on the part of the many, who only desire good and kindly rule, but a ferment spread by the few who themselves wished to rule. Had democracy been such a proved success in Western countries with the advantage of homogeneous populations that we should seek to introduce it among the heterogeneous inhabitants of the continent of India ? The tendency in Nepal in his time seemed to be towards a modification of purely autocratic rule by the employment of advisory councils—perhaps of all forms of government the sanest.

By his own countrymen Chandra's name will always be revered for the establishment of Nepal's



independence on an assured basis, for his wise and peaceful administration and for the many ameliorations he brought about in the lot of the people, among which may specially be mentioned the abolition of *sati* and of slavery. By Great Britain the part he played in the war, and the sacrifices made by his country in lives and money on a scale totally out of proportion to its population and resources, must never be forgotten. Chandra was indeed a staunch friend at the time of England's greatest need.

XIV.

A ROYAL SHOOTING-GROUND.

THE visit of the Prince of Wales to the Nepal Terai as guest of the late Prime Minister of the Gurkha kingdom, Sir Chandra Shumshere Jung, was not the first paid by members of the Royal family to these famous shooting-grounds. Many readers will remember the voyage of the old *Serapis* and the pictures of the Indian tour and trip to Nepal of King Edward, then Prince of Wales. In 1911, again, our present King received a royal welcome in the Gurkha kingdom, and in the course of a shoot, that I suppose constitutes a record, achieved a great reputation as a shot, incidentally proving that one who can deal brilliantly with high pheasants is equal to dealing with most things in the shooting line, including tigers. I think nearly forty tigers were bagged in a fortnight, besides such 'various' as the 'great Indian rhinoceros.' The Prince's bag in 1921 (seven days' shooting) was seventeen tigers, ten rhinos, two leopards, two bears, besides a hamadryad—the most vicious and deadly of all snakes—shot by H.R.H. himself.

Tiger shooting is managed in different ways, according to locality. In the comparatively open jungle of the Central Provinces and Central India, beaters on foot, with fearsome yells and the din of tom-toms, move the tigers up to guns in *machans*, or posted up trees in variously contrived seats. In the United Provinces a line of elephants performs the

same function, the art in both cases lying in an appreciation of the tiger's habits and a knowledge of the ground. Then there is 'sitting up' over a kill—the jungle-lover's method. In some places the tiger may be shot on foot—when done with care not so risky as it sounds. In Manchuria it is said a sportsman has to crawl after them into caves! The Nepalese way is different to all these, having been evolved to meet the exigencies of a jungle quite unlike anything found elsewhere.

The tangle of valleys at the foot of the giant Himalayan ranges is covered with dense vegetation of a thousand different forms. The lower lying tracts consist for the most part of virgin *sal* forest, the tall straight boles, crowded together, stretching upward for light and air from a sea of undergrowth. In the hollows and damper stretches creepers cling about the trees, and in the forest gloaming one is aware of a silent struggle for existence among these vegetable things. One sees great forest trees, killed and rotting, held up in constrictor-like coils or caught in tangled webs of living rope, a fight between the nobler forest forms and parasitic growths. The fight even goes on between members of the predatory creeping tribes themselves. Mingled with the varied odours of living green things there is a faint ever-present acrid smell of decaying vegetation. Elsewhere one finds wide acres of *narkal*, a reed-like grass of great height, tunnelled by the fauna of the forest, but otherwise more impenetrable than the tree jungle. The forest may indeed be compared to a great city, but peopled by plants, of many races and diverse habits; with spacious residences where live the sylvan aristocrats, congested areas where struggling multitudes toil, with river-ways, streets and parks. In the stifling overgrown forest men can only walk by the few well-defined forest paths; wandering off these they are swallowed up, blind and lost. Here there is no wealth of flowers.



Perhaps the vegetation is too heavy. But now and again, pushing on an elephant through the dense forest, monotonous in its shades of green, one is delighted by a flash of colour. It may be a flaming *dhak* or a great cotton-tree standing on the river's bank ablaze with scarlet blossoms. It may be a mass of mauve orchids hanging on a tree, so lovely one feels inclined to tear it from its roots to send home to England. Better refrain! Certainly it would be beautiful anywhere. Even in an English orchid house it would pass as beautiful; but it would have become one of a hundred, an interesting kind perhaps of *Odontoglossum* or *Epidendrum*. Here in its own home, in the sombre jungle, cradled in the arms of a giant, it has a strange and indescribable loveliness.

Methods of tiger-hunting suitable elsewhere will not do in this country. A tiger, moved from his lair, has no one line of retreat better than another. In every direction stretches his jungle domain, equally dense, equally impenetrable. Hence the Nepalese system of ringing by elephants.

I will try to depict the death of a tiger as it in fact occurred, a bald and unvarnished tale. The camp, situated on the high bank of a sandy river-bed, the circle of tents, the harbour where the skimmers work, in which are neatly pegged-out skins, large and small, the elephant camp, the various camp noises, the tonk, tonk, tonk of a jungle bird (a barbet), that night and day continues his monotonous machine-like call—he is, I suppose, relieved by his pals,—the trumpeting of elephants; such details may be left to the reader's imagination.

As to locality, it is the famous Chitawan Valley where the Royal shoots were held. It is 'after breakfast' time. The elephants are assembled, a picturesque group, on the river's edge. Last touches are given to girths, the guns climb into howdahs, rifles are stowed into their racks, and the great beasts swing slowly off in single file. The three

shikaris, wrinkled, hard-looking little men from the Limbu country, hunched up like monkeys on one biddable and fleet elephant, lead the way. The scene is photographed on one's memory. The cool shadow of the forest on the sand, the long swaying string of elephants—the hind-quarters of the one in front of us, with his loose skin, has the ridiculous appearance of a fat old man in baggy grey trousers. A herd of nilgai cross the river half a mile ahead, peafowl scuttle into the jungle. A jackal is trotting towards us and now stands. Him the *shikaris* avoid, turning half left to keep him on our right. To pass him the other side would be ill-luck.

The domestic buffalo calf killed during the night had been tied up on the bank of a river that wound through the forest, for tigers in their nightly wanderings usually keep to paths, river-beds and open spaces. He was secured with a rope strong enough to hold him, but not so strong that a tiger could not easily snap it, to carry off his prey to the nearest thick jungle. Now nothing is left but a broken rope, a little blood-stained straw, and on the sand a few tell-tale tracks. The slayer, in all probability, is lying within two hundred yards of us. At a signal from the head *shikari* the elephants enter the jungle one by one, alternately going half right and half left, with an interval of twenty or thirty yards between each. The two strings of elephants thus formed subsequently converge and meet, thus completing the ring. One of the five guns is left to guard the river-bed, the rest are distributed with the elephants. All face towards the centre of the ring and stand. The manœuvre has been carried out without much talking, but by no means without noise. The crashing of our forty elephants through the jungle must certainly have been heard by any animal within the ring; but Nepalese *shikaris* hold that a tiger that has fed will not move unless the elephants almost kick him up, and that by the time

he really scents danger he has been surrounded. Tigers are, of course, used to hearing wild elephants crashing about.

It is in this jungle work that Nepalese elephants and their *mahouts* excel. Working together, the *mahout* with his sharp heavy *kukri*, the elephant using his trunk as a mighty arm, his forehead as a battering ram, they will together go through anything. Trees go crashing down as the elephant puts his weight against them. At a word he breaks down branches that threaten the howdah; it is only the lianas, with no beginning and no end, and having the tensile strength of a hempen rope, that defeat him. But the *kukri* cuts through their sappy flesh like a carrot.

Would that these terrible little weapons were never employed for worse purposes! Many of these Tharu *mahouts* seem to use their *kukris* far too much on the marvellously docile beasts they are in charge of, though it is not for us, who have never driven elephants, to pass judgment. It may be that the elephants' tractability is due to their being kept in subjection by severe means. Certain it is, at any rate, that as some *mahouts* are cruel, so some elephants are obstinate and vicious. About the wonderful understanding that exists between the Nepalese *mahout* and his elephant, more intimate, I believe, than that between a shepherd and his dog, much could be said. A *mahout* will make his elephant understand which one of a number of branches he must break. When crossing water he will, in one sentence, tell his elephant to give him a drink, and though an elephant's trunk holds many gallons, he will curl his trunk over his head and pour into his *mahout's* hands with the utmost gentleness just so much as will fill them and no more! That, to my mind, indicates a higher standard of intelligence than is met with in any other animal. One could multiply instances of this sort. Hear the man talk to his

elephant like a human being, long reasoned arguments, expostulations, chidings and, doubtless, vilifications. The little, rolling, expressive eyes in that massive immovable head, besides wonderful intelligence, indicate, I am sure, capabilities of unlimited affection. Be the sport good or bad, a day in the forest behind a Nepalese *mahout* is always interesting.

The ring has been made, though one can actually see no elephants except the nearer ones on either hand. The *shikari* in charge cruises round on his speedy mount to advance one elephant, retire another, and finally, having made good the gaps, to draw the ring closer. But there, bang! From the far side a shot shows the tiger has moved. All stand their ground, and word presently reaches us that the tiger came out to A. And here comes A. to speak for himself. The tiger, it seems, made straight at him, but his elephant was unsteady, spun round; he is afraid he must have missed. Going to the spot, we find the *shikaris* on the ground. A speck of blood has been found. Protected by guns on either side, they follow step by step the faint indications. After working through the very thickest tree and creeper jungle for half an hour or more, we come to an almost imperceptible rise in the ground and find ourselves in what might be a different country. Ferns form a complete carpet under our elephants' feet, vistas open here and there, and a fairy stream trickles between banks of speedwort. Orchids hang on many of the trees. The *shikaris* here suddenly abandon tracking, mount their elephants, signal to the *mahouts* and, with the precision of a disciplined force, horns are thrown out on the flanks and another ring is made. It seems like the last resort of the hopeless, for the tiger's wound is evidently very slight, and by this time he could have travelled miles. He is a lost tiger, that is clear, and the *shikaris* know it, and are merely doing something to save their faces. However, the net is cast, and we wait, despondent.



Suddenly comes the sound of shouting, and, mingled with the shouts, the voice of an angry tiger. The short gruff roars are coming our way. Nearer and nearer. The *mahouts* steady their elephants. Here he comes, a great striped cat, looking all head, making a terrific noise and charging straight at the little tusker on our left. A bang, and over he goes like a rabbit, and lies dead almost underneath the young elephant. The latter has not budged a step, and becomes a hero, whose conduct will be reported in the proper quarter. Elephants gather, the *shikaris* take the blood on four leaves, do 'puja,' and throw them this way and that, and we congratulate them on a fine and almost mysterious bit of *shikar*. By what occult perceptions did those little slit-eyed men discern that the tiger would lie up in that particular patch?

This was not quite typical of a Nepal ring. The tiger generally lies till the ring is drawn much closer. The elephants, as they are moved forward, level down the grass or undergrowth and the smaller trees, so that you have a clear ring like a broad ride running round the central patch. When this has been reduced to a diameter of a hundred yards or a little more—a smaller ring than this would entail risks to elephants from bullets—two stout elephants are sent in to move the tiger. It is a great sight to see an elephant push down a young tree on the top of a tiger, whose exact whereabouts is often unknown till this happens, or, it may be, till he is hit by a log of wood thrown by a *mahout*. Then he is up with a roar and charges the ring. Curiously enough he does not often attack the elephant that has roused him. The following true and quaint incident recently occurred in Nepal: A tiger charged through the ring unwounded. After him hurried a *shikari* on a fast little elephant to head him. The tiger sprang on his elephant, who, screaming with fright, bolted back to his companions in the ring. There he managed to

deposit the tiger, or, at any rate, the tiger dropped off and was shot.

Most *shikar* elephants get honourable scars in the course of their careers. Occasionally one gets killed. The following letter from an Indian Zamindar, who had sent some elephants to a big tiger shoot in Nepal, is amongst the archives of the Legation at Khatmandu :—

“SIR,—I request to inform you that my elephant Bak Bahadur, sent to help in great sport in jungle of Nepal, died on 21st ultimo of tiger bite. I had been justly proud for my elephant on hearing he was the only elephant who stood before the ferocious tigers and faced them with their fierce attacks. The mahout requested that two or three tigers attacked him, but he faced them all and never receded a budge. He was severely bitten by one and this brought on rabies, and, in spite of all my attempts to save him by administering all available help, treatment and medicine, the poor thing breathed his last, to my great sorrow, misfortune and mortification. Really I am sorry for having lost such a bold and fearless, at the same time so child-like and innocent an animal. . . .”

This ringing is, of course, a deadly sledge-hammer way of shooting tigers, and with a lot of elephants the tiger's chances of escape are small ; but howdah elephants, staunch enough to stand when charged, are essential, and these are not easy to find. The best are usually big tuskers, but all are liable to lose their nerve after a few years' experience, especially if, as is commonly the case, they have had their adventures. The danger from an unstaunch elephant lies, perhaps, not so much from the tiger as from the risk of the howdah being swept off in a panic-stricken flight through the jungle, for, in spite of their bulk and apparently equable temperament, elephants are 'bundles of nerves.'

I once, on a very stout-hearted old tusker, made the mistake of taking up a 'half right' orienta-



tion in a ring, so as to get a clearer field of fire, instead of directly facing the enemy. The tiger made a demonstration on our left flank, and Bikram Pershad spun round so quickly that not only my bullet sped 'in a totally wrong direction,' but I was flung against the howdah rails hard enough to break a rib. I am sure that if the elephant had been facing the tiger he would have stood like an old grey rock.

The Nepalese like eighty or a hundred elephants to form a ring, though this number is not really necessary except in very large patches of *narkal*. For the Prince's shoot Sir Chandra had about 400 elephants, divided into 'phants' of a hundred each, and located in different parts of the ground to be shot over.

The Nepal Terai is no longer the same wonderful shooting-ground that it was when King Edward shot here. Then the whole of the 500-mile stretch was the home of tiger and rhino, swamp deer, sambur and smaller deer. Bison and wild elephants roamed the foothills, and buffaloes were found as far west as the Gandak River. Tigers are still fairly numerous throughout the whole area, but not as they were. Cultivation has extended—one does not grudge that—but the cultivators, belonging to the aboriginal tribe of Tharus, who alone of all people are immune from the deadly Terai fever called *awal*, are born poachers and have gone near to exterminating the deer and pig that formerly were so plentiful. Tigers thus deprived of their natural food have become in consequence cattle rather than game killers. They follow the herds down from the hills when the latter are driven to graze in the low ground during the winter, so that it can almost be said that where there are no cattle there are no tigers. Graziers also bring herds into the Nepal Terai from India during the cold weather, and as tigers wander great distances, they soon get to know where the herds are. All this, of course, makes for their concentration and destruction.

As for the deer ; when wandering through these magnificent forests, it is lamentable how few one sees. Yet game laws do exist in Nepal. For instance, a Nepalese who kills a rhino, considered 'royal game,' is fined 1000 rupees, while the fine for a tiger is 500. Conversely a Nepalese who kills one of these animals *with* permission is rewarded by the same amount. As regards deer, the laws seem ineffectual, as villagers are allowed to kill those found in their crops ; and actually of course, as in India, they kill them *anywhere*. Bison and wild elephants are never shot. The former, like nilgai, are sacred in a Hindu State, while the elephant is preserved for capture ; but for some reason the numbers of both seem to be on the decline, the reason being rather obscure. Elephants are captured by the Nepalese method of long and patient pursuit. The big, well fed, tame tuskers used for the purpose will outstay the wild chaps (as a corn-fed will beat a grass-fed horse), and eventually, after a final struggle, they will bring them home exhausted, prisoners. Nowadays there do not seem to be important enough wild herds to make big *Keddah* operations worth their great expense, though a few years ago the Nepal Government got an expert from Assam to instruct their people in the *Keddah* method.

The buffalo is not sacred in Nepal, and their extermination in this country is, I fear, only a matter of time. Few herds exist, and these only in the morung, as the Terai east of the Kosi River is called. When we were shooting in this part a few years ago there was in one ring at the same time a buffalo bull, a tiger, a herd of cheetal and a sounder of pig ! This was exceptional. In the wide stretches of grass on the banks of the Kosi for instance, where the Maharaja of Bikanir had previously made a big bag of tiger, neither buffaloes nor tigers were found, though as our line of elephants swept along, the numbers of hog deer, bustard and partridges put up

was quite astounding. Unless, however, the laws about protection are tightened, this wonderful country is doomed from a sporting point of view.

Rhinoceros are now practically only found in the country lying east of the Gandak River, known as Chitawan. In this part they have been, and are, very strictly preserved, and anyone that is accorded the privilege of entering the district can still see more of these huge beasts than he could anywhere else in the world. They are the biggest of the rhinoceros family, and, of course, quite a different species to those found in Africa. Van Linschoten, writing so long ago as 1587, gave quite a good description of them :—

“The rhinoceros,” he wrote, “is lesse and lower than the elephant. It hath a short horne upon the nose, in the hinder parts somewhat bigge, and toward the end sharper, of a browne blew, and whitish colour; it hath a snout like a Hog and the skin upon the upper part of his body is all wrinkled, as if it were armed with Shields or Targets. It is a great enemie of the Elephant. Some think it is the right Unicorne, because that as yet there hath none other been found, but onely by heare-say and by the pictures of them. These Rhinoceroses when they will drink the other beasts stand and wait upon them till the Rhinoceros hath drunk, and thrust their horn into the water and then after him all the other beasts doe drink. Their horns in India are much esteemed and used against all venome, poyson and many other deseases likewise his teeth, clawes, flesh, skin and bloud, and his very dung and water and all what-soever is about him is much esteemed in India, and used for the curing of many deseases and sicknesses, which is very good and most true as I my selfe by experience have found.”

In the old days, rhino shooting used to be considered a very dangerous sport, that is, before H.V. rifles came into use. That famous old sportsman, Sir Jung Bahadur, used, however, often to take his ladies with him when after rhino, till one of them

was killed through the elephant carrying their howdah being charged and knocked over. Ladies were thereafter barred. Rhino in this country, like other animals, can only be shot from elephants, but elephants staunch to rhino are scarcer than those staunch to tiger. The 'ringing' method cannot be employed, for if these beasts are in a tight place, they will always charge, and will so scatter and demoralise the elephants that their nerves will not recover for months, if at all.

The proper plan is for two or three guns to go together to the rhino ground, which is generally the very thickest tree jungle, or else *narkal*, where the going is marshy. They are located by their unmistakable three-toed tracks, by the crashing of branches, or by their peculiar snorts, which remind one rather of a short burst of machine-gun fire, though less loud and sharp. One does not find them particularly anxious to get right away, and all that is necessary is to manœuvre about to get a clear shot at head or neck. You see the huge uncouth brute vaguely outlined amid the greenery, standing looking at you perhaps twenty yards away. There is nothing to aim at except his nose and horn, or perhaps his chest; all equally futile, even with so heavy a weapon as an H.V. 500 rifle. Nearer you dare not go, as he would charge, which, in the jungle, would probably result in the howdah being swept by branches off your bolting elephant. No elephant will stand to a charging rhino, and very few in such circumstances will stand long enough even to give you the chance of a shot. Well, there you are looking at one another. Then while you are wondering about the next move, perhaps with an astounding snort, whistle or squeal, or a combination of all three, the rhino moves off with a rush, and your elephant, with a pirouette, followed by a few yards' strategic retirement, displays the panicky state of his nerves. It is in a way what one might expect, as an elephant has no means

of defence against a rhino. Against this is the fact that wild elephant and rhinoceros are often found on the same ground. I suppose till the human biped intrudes, they must have little to say to one another.

The rhino will not go far before he stands again, and the rest depends on circumstances. If you can get a shot below the ear he will sink down so instantaneously dead that he will not roll over. You can then realise his huge bulk, with the aid of a tape. A moderately big male shot by the writer measured five feet nine at the shoulder. It took eight carts to bring him to camp. As to a rhino's carcass, in the Nepal Terai, the Tharus, like vultures, seem to assemble from nowhere. They sop up the blood on rags. When dried, the water in which the rag is dipped is a specific against cholera. The urine, also an important item in the *materia medica* of the jungle—heaven knows for what ailment—is caught in bottles, or any vessel handy, while of the meat, not a gristly shred is left, for it is all eaten. Regarded as a sport, rhino shooting cannot be ranked very high, but when you see the huge carcass stripped clean by these jungle-dwellers, every scrap (and drop) to be used, not only for food but for medicine, love-making and the casting out of devils, one cannot but feel the glow of benevolence that accompanies a truly virtuous deed. One evening our own menu included roast peafowl, *sambur* marrow on toast and rhino's tongue. The latter is not as disagreeable as it sounds, though I cannot praise it further.

The male may be recognised from the female by his shorter and thicker horn, worn blunt by combats, in which it is said that rhinos kill one another. The longer and sharper female's horn has a more unpleasant appearance, and this sex, especially when they have a calf at heel, display more gratuitous truculence. My wife and I once had a stand in an open space as if a broad ride had been cut in the

forest. A few elephants were being put through to move a tiger towards us. A man posted up a tree signalled a tiger towards our left front, but he had not come out when we heard a rhino crashing just in front of us, and shortly afterwards a female pushed her head out of the jungle and came slowly out. She had a calf with her. Seeing our elephant, she stood looking at us not twenty-five yards away. We looked at her. A rhino's face, I may remark, is totally without expression, like a lump of wood. Our elephant also stood and looked. I had no wish to shoot, and we remained like that for what seemed a considerable time. I would have given a good deal for a camera. Then she suddenly tossed her head and came at us at a lumbering gallop. An elephant can be marvellously quick under such circumstances. Next moment a man, flung violently about in a howdah on a bolting elephant, hatless, only concerned to hold on to the howdah rail with one hand and his rifle with the other, was being adjured to shoot! Shoot indeed! The rhino having chased us headlong for forty or fifty yards, to our relief turned off into the jungle. Our elephant had fortunately kept to the open, or our plight would have been sad. We returned to our stand, and the elephant was just picking up my hat to give me, when the tiger in two bounds crossed the ride. I did shoot, but the bullet that sped knocked the dust up somewhere behind his tail. That elephant had a very good reputation with rhino, and I took the first opportunity of asking the *mahout* to account for his somewhat ignominious flight.

"Nay, sahib," he said, "Mangal Pershad behaved well. Did he not stand? But he expected your honour to shoot, and when you did not shoot, he felt himself without support and fled."

His explanation was, I am sure, quite correct. Poor Mangal felt he had lost his human backing and his nerve gave way.



The scene in the wonderful jungles of Chitawan I love best to recall, occurred one evening during a return towards camp. We had been out all day. The elephants were strung out in a long line, the *mahouts* hurrying them along at their ridiculous best pace to reach the tents before darkness fell. We were tired and dusty. The sun was setting, turning to gold the tips of the *sal* trees on the high *dhamar* to our right, while on the other hand, over the open stretch of sand, reeds and river, a light mist was rising from the water, almost concealing the line of forest on the far bank. A chill had fallen on the air. Jungle fowl were calling, peafowl were already fluttering up to their perches on the high cotton-trees. Somewhere quite close by a *kakar* was barking persistently. Turning a bend in the forest path, we came to a sort of natural clearing, a grassy lawn making a bay in the forest. In the middle of this stood a huge rhinoceros. He looked like a monstrous image of clay. With his grotesque shape, long boat-shaped head, his folds of riveted armour, it was as if a monster of some bygone age had been aroused from the slime and a sleep of thousands of years. The leading *mahouts* halted their elephants on seeing him. I had no desire to shoot and all shouted to scare him away. He just turned his great head, but otherwise would not stir, so we filed tremulously by, so near one could almost have hit him with a stone. Looking back from the next turning, the huge grey image was still standing immovable in the gloom.

XV.

SWAMP DEER.

"ON the Monday," had decreed Colonel Guruji Singh, in one of the startling translations of his own idiom that made his conversation a delight, "you may play for deer by the Bhadi Lake. I think you shall made a good game."

It was sunrise on Monday morning. The lake lay amid wide stretches of yellow grass, its margin indented by many a reed-fringed creek and inlet. Bounding the view on the farther side, the *sal* forest showed a low dark line against the bright horizon. The morning mist was rolling up, revealing new expanses of delicate blues and yellows that melt into green. Water, reeds and grass so blending that one could hardly tell where one began and the other ended. The surface of the lake was dotted with wild-fowl; wading birds stood in the shallows, more were yet winging their way in twos and threes from the forests. From somewhere across the water came the musical antiphonal cries of a pair of sarus cranes.

My plan was to make a round of the lake alone in the early morning in the hope of finding a big stag in the open; the others were to join me later for a beat through the reeds.

In the Terai, that long stretch of jungle that lies south of the Himalayan foothills, the very name of which conjures up visions of rhinoceros and tiger, boar, buffalo and many lesser denizens of Indian

shikar lands, a tract now alas shrinking before the advance of cultivating man, the human being on foot is a poor creature. Hung up in tangles of lianas, or lost in grass two or three times his own height, he can neither see nor progress. So it was from a howdah on the broad back of Lila Guj that I took out my glasses to spy. The sarus cranes, their red heads gleaming in the sun's level rays, jumped first into focus; the mass of wild-fowl were distinguishable as belonging to the pochard tribe; the moving white dots in the distance became egrets. Some forms on the far margin were certainly deer, but they vanished before I could make out if a stag were among them.

Four hours later I had completed the circuit of the lake and had seen nothing. Nothing, that is, that I wanted to shoot.

Many living creatures there were, perhaps not less interesting because they aroused no murderous thoughts. On that lonely mere, were, I think, representatives from most of the long-legged clans that haunt the fen lands of India. Cranes and herons, rails, bitterns, crakes, ibises and many another. Fishing eagles were busy at their trade. At the farther end of the lake I disturbed a colony of purple coots, and marked as they got up the wonderful iridescent gleam of their plumage in the sun. At one spot my elephant went near to treading on the glistening coils of a python as he writhed himself into obscurity among the water-covered reed roots.

The rest of the party had arrived and the elephants were lined up for the first beat through the high grass on the western side of the *tal*. The two guns were on the flanks and a little advanced. The Nepalese Colonel, Guruji Singh, on the right, nearest the deep water, was in a high state of elation, as one has a clear right to be who has shot a big tiger before breakfast. We had ringed that tiger with elephants once and



failed to get him, though afterwards we had caught a fleeting glimpse of his yellow and black hide as he disappeared in the forest ; twice my wife and I had sat up for him and failed to get a shot, though in the stillness of the night we had heard his stealthy tread on the dry leaves under our tree and his vibrant purr. This very morning, the Colonel had gone out before dawn on his elephant to look at the kill, had met the tiger face to face as he was walking in the forest and had brought him back to camp.

The line moved on, our twelve elephants covering a front of 300 yards or so, those nearer the lake splashing through shallow water. We were out, as the reader will have gleaned, after *gond*, sometimes called *bara singha* (not to be confused with the Kashmir deer), but generally known to British sportsmen as swamp deer. Our forbears in India, the gay and gallant gentlemen who did their tiger shooting and pig sticking in pink coats and top hats, cannot be absolved from the charge of ticketing many of the Indian game animals in a very libellous manner. The 'sloth bear,' rather less slothful than any other variety ; the 'ravine deer,' a gazelle ; the 'hog deer,' one of the daintiest of the family of axis ; the 'jungle sheep' (now generally called the barking deer), not a sheep at all. But there is nothing inapt about the old name of 'swamp deer.' They are found on the swampy margins of the *tals* of the Terai, where dense reeds and grass give them the cover and grazing that the deer tribe generally seek in forests.

We put up birds in plenty as we went along. Perhaps it was because small game was barred that day that the duck came over us so grandly, and the black and swamp partridges curled back high over the line in the way one would like them to do when out with a different object. Snipe, too, there were, but not in the numbers one might expect, except the painted variety, a pretty bird but slow flying, and no

good from the point of view that makes a snipe a snipe.

Shortly before a hind had come by us *ventre à terre*, an elephant trumpet had made us look round. There were happenings the other end of the line. We saw an elephant wheel round and then seemingly drop down. What had occurred we heard afterwards from wizened *shikari* Kallu, who was on the pad behind that elephant's *mahout*. Moghal Pershad, the bad-tempered tusker, was in one of his moods that day. A mysterious trait in elephants' almost human characters is their antipathies, it may be to individuals or it may be to species. Moghal Pershad, while steady enough with other animals, for some unfathomable reason hated swamp deer. So when his pet aversion, the innocent hind, had broken from under his feet, he screamed with rage, rushed at her, threw himself down on his knees and tried to roll over on her. Kallu was all but on the ground, where he would have met the fate intended for the deer. Moghal Pershad had once before killed his *mahout*, and would certainly have vented his rage on any living thing he saw on the ground at that moment. Kallu's nerves were completely gone. He was too old, he muttered, for such a life and would abandon *shikar* and live at home while he had a few years left. We sympathised, for a vicious elephant is degrees worse than the most evil of man-eating horses. For my part I always look on the *mahout* of a morose tusker as no small hero. But like those who live unconcernedly on the slopes of a volcano, I suppose he gets used to the imminence of a violent end.

By the time we had got half-way down the lake side, the happy Colonel had had a snap at a stag that broke back. A long curved arm of the lake here branched off and we decided to beat down the heavy grass south of this before continuing along the big reed belt. Deer moved from the grass would either



cross into the big belt which we were going to do later, or across the open to the *sal* forest. So while the Colonel elected to keep with the beaters, I went on to a spot whence I could cover an open stretch of water, the line a beast would take for the forest. I stood my elephant in the water behind a clump of reeds. As the line began to advance, we could hear the noise of water churned up by elephants' feet and occasionally get glimpses through the reeds of their swaying forms. Then came a sound of another kind, the staccato splashes of animals bounding through water. Deer appeared in the reeds, disappeared; now they are coming straight to us, plunging on amid showers of spray. But all hinds. Some saw my elephant and broke back, two came by at shotgun range. As the line approached, a stag broke into open water to the left of the line. Two shots from the Colonel, then a third. The stag sank down. Only a horn stuck out of the water like a withered branch, to mark the spot. More hinds dashed by and the beat was over.

The writer has shot all the Indian varieties of deer, the Persian Maral and the Scottish red deer; and the American deer he has not shot he has read about. All seem to take readily to water, are strong swimmers and love a wallow in a bog. But I think the *gond* is the only kind that one may almost call amphibious. I half expected to find them with webbed feet! But their habits have developed no peculiarities of this kind. Just a big powerful deer, nearly as heavy as *sambur*, with a thick grizzled coat and rather long pale-coloured hoofs, the latter, I suppose, a result of living on soft ground. In March, the month in which we were shooting, they were nearly always found in water some two or three feet deep. Among the reed-beds, which form their feeding-grounds, we found their well-worn runs ramifying in every direction like tunnels, along which they could move without disturbing the

DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN POLITICAL

reeds which met overhead. Game animals all have their appropriate refuges. Instinct drives the *ammon* to knolls and ridges where the wind warns him of danger, the *markhor* finds safety in dizzy precipices, the gazelle in the bare desert. The refuge of the swamp deer of the Terai is the gloom and silence of the *sal* forest, where a panther can hardly move unheard. One finds their runs among the reeds generally converging to a bolt-hole towards the forest by which they can escape, so I imagine that even beating with a line of elephants we only saw a proportion of the deer actually in the reeds.

While *gond* sometimes move off directly the first sounds of splashing, from perhaps half a mile away or more, reach them, at others they lie close like rabbits. A few days before this Monday, our line was beating through some very thick stuff for the *second* time, when there was a rush of animals from in front of the elephants on my left. Nothing was visible but the points of a pair of horns going away fifty yards ahead, but they were hidden before I could get my rifle to my shoulder. A second stag followed with apparently a good head, and at him I took a snap shot, aiming below the horns, but he went on. Two hundred yards ahead the first stag crossed a bit of open water and was gone. His companion was not with him and might be wounded. We made a ring round the spot where he was last seen, closed in and found nothing. Then, as we were going on again, the stag suddenly jumped up and went back through the line. He was seen by one elephant *mahout* who declared he was wounded. We took a line back and then ringed a bit on the chance of his having stayed there. As good fortune would have it, he was put up again and came straight towards me and I shot him. The first shot had only slightly wounded him. As he lay half under the water he was so hard to see, owing to his 'protective' colouring and the mingling of his antlers with the



reeds, that I am convinced if I had not seen him collapse and kept my eyes on the spot not ten yards away, we should probably have failed to find him at all. I say this feelingly, as I once lost a dead *gond* this way and only found him a couple of days later by the merest fluke. In fact, to lose a great big stag in these reeds is as easy a matter as losing a dead snipe in a thick bit of stuff in an Irish bog with no dog to help you. That stag turned out to be the best head I shot, fifteen points with a beam of 35½ inches.

The antlers of this deer are very fine, running up to, it is said, eighteen points, with a measurement of 40 inches along the beam. But these were heads of the good old times. Nowadays one should be well pleased with a head as good as that first mentioned. Antlers are shed in April, but a proportion of heads shot any time after they have hardened have the ugly peculiarity of being quite white from burr to point. According to Kallu, these white antlers are those of stags whose velvet has been rubbed off on the reeds and not on trees, and he was very likely right.

Half an hour later, I had taken up a position for the big drive down the reed-bed. To my left a long promontory of reeds ran out into the lake to a point 150 yards away. Looking to the right, I was separated from another open stretch of water by a narrow line of reeds, over which I could see. Deer moving forward would almost certainly either come out at the point or cross the open water to my right. I had stood at this identical spot for a drive only a few days before. A good stag had come out at the point on my left. He was making to cross the lake at this, its narrowest point, a stretch of weed-covered water some four or five hundred yards broad. I was just going to shoot when down the stag went into deep water and began swimming. I watched, hoping every moment that he would get his footing on a

DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN POLITICAL

shallow and give me something to shoot at ; but it was deep water the whole way, and I had the annoyance of seeing his head, crowned with goodness knows how many glistening points, move slowly across the surface of the water till he emerged and was lost among the reeds on the far bank. A truly wonderful swim, in water so thick with weeds that I believe a man or any other purely land animal would have drowned before he had gone ten yards, yet I suppose nothing unusual for the *gond*, as he was not pressed.

If I had known he would not show his body again, should I have taken the shot at his moving head ? I suppose I should. It would have been clean kill or clean miss, but I may say, very long odds on the latter. This pessimistic view will be appreciated by anyone who has shot off an elephant. Under the best conditions, it is rather like shooting from a gently moving boat. The elephant is always wrenching up stuff to eat, a trunkful of *narkal* or elephant grass, the wild rice that grows in these *tals*, or anything that comes handy, knocking it clean of mud on his knee and stuffing it into his mouth. A good *mahout* can stop that, but he can hardly prevent him switching his tail, flapping his ears and shifting his weight from one foot to another. A steady shot, such as one likes to get when stalking, huddled in a comfortable position, heels dug into the ground, elbows on knees, is a thing you may think about but certainly won't get from a howdah. In fact, it is quite a question whether one's foresight wobbles less if one sits down and rests the rifle on the howdah rail, or stands up using no rest at all. Snapshooting at short ranges, such as one generally gets when jungle shooting, is a different proposition. That is a knack which can be acquired with a little practice while the elephant is moving along. I have heard of people being able to deal satisfactorily with snipe from a howdah, but I fancy that must have

been *scolopax* in those tamer moments that sometimes come to him under a hot sun, not as we like to picture him.

Well, the beat has been moving up. I had heard the distant splashing of deer moving towards the point, and yes, there is the glint of white-tipped antlers. Is history to repeat itself? I made ready to take the shot, this time the very moment the stag showed himself. Two hinds are already clear. It will be a 150 yards shot, and all will depend on the elephant. Will he stand steady for the critical half-second? Here he comes. As the stag shows clear I pull. Down he goes, a trifle too abruptly it seemed, for the plunge into deep water. And no antlered head to be seen in the hind's wake.

He was dead, sure enough, though down among the floating weeds it took time to find him. The water was too deep for us to get the stag on an elephant, so a rope was hitched to his horns and thus in tow he reached the shore. Here I had my first opportunity of examining his head. He turned out to be a fine 15-pointer, and I think the same beast that had given that notable swimming performance a few days before.

In these times, it is only in a few parts of the Terai that *gond* are found in any numbers. There is one estate where they were carefully preserved in view of the expected visit of the Prince of Wales. Here there are said to be herds numbering thousands. One cannot help wondering what on earth one would do when confronted with such an assembly! In 'Jerdon' an animated description is given of a scene in Central India: "The plain stretched away in gentle undulations towards the river, distant about a mile, and on it were three large herds of *barasinghas* feeding at one time; the nearest was not more than 500 yards away from where I stood; there must have been at least 50 of them—stags, hinds, and fawns—feeding together in a lump, and outside the herd

grazed three most enormous stags. . . . Then the herd went off in earnest, showing a perfect forest of antlers, and the clatter of their hoofs on the hard ground was like the sound of a squadron of cavalry going to water ! ”

I did once come across such a collection in the open plain. It appeared that deer from all the neighbouring *tals* had assembled for the sake of the young grass coming up where the old grass had been burnt. There were probably 300 of them, scattered in groups over an area of ten or twelve acres, but among the lot only three stags worth a shot, the rest were hinds and young stags. An approach unseen was out of the question. What was to be done ?

On the plains of Persia, bare of cover, my wife had learnt how to bring gazelle up to a concealed gun by riding round them at a walk and manœuvring them in the right direction ; at once an art and a science. Why not try the Persian plan with these big deer ? The rest of the elephants were sent to a distance. The writer got behind a solitary tree, his wife set out on a pad elephant. The elephant was slow and unhandy. The *mahout* had never in his life seen such a performance. It took an hour and a half, but it was done and done well. The two best stags were bagged, one of them a 16-pointer. “ I cannot forget,” the Nepalese colonel afterwards wrote to me, “ the *tactful* way your lady sent those deer to you ! ”



XVI.

A NEPALESE ARMOURY.

DURING our stay in Nepal it had been one of my foremost desires to visit the famous Arsenal Museum. Through the kindness of the Prime Minister this became possible, and one afternoon in June we took our seats in the state barouche sent to carry us there. As we started, the sun was beating hot on our backs, but behind the Seopuri mountain a cloud was rising that looked ugly. The shady Legation grounds left behind, the road skirted a stretch of emerald turf that—with clothes hung up to dry—reminded one vaguely of a village green at home. Then high walls, concealing gardens and white palaces owned by the Nepalese princes, shut us in, till suddenly the stretch of the *Maidan* opened. It is the big parade ground of the country, and with its avenues, statues and stone-built tanks must be one of the most picturesque in the world. From here one could see, and ever be conscious of, the vast Himalaya rising tier beyond tier to the Tibetan ranges, with Everest still undefeated, one of a thousand snowy peaks and massifs. The *Maidan* was, as usual, pullulating with khaki-clad battalions with guns and cavalry, all drilling very earnestly. Many of the units had but recently returned from service on the Indian Frontier, for in addition to providing for the enlistment for Gurkha battalions of the Indian Army, the Prime Minister of Nepal had lent their own splendid troops to the Government of India.

After following the main boulevard a little distance our road turned, and we rattled down the cobbled main street of Khatmandu. The parade ground, statues, everything reminiscent of a European capital, had gone, and we were in a bazaar fantastic as an opium-smoker's dreams. From the top of high columns brazen images look down over crowded streets. We pass flagged courtyards with lion-guarded porches, giving entrance to heaven knows what mysteries. Temples, pagoda-shaped, with gold up-curved eaves and pilasters of intricately carved wood throw black shadows. On all sides you meet the stony or metallic eyes of beasts and men and semi-human *garuda* birds. Gods and devils, painted blue and vermilion, prance obscenely on the walls. The trouble is to recognise which is which. Blue pigeons flash against the deeper blue of the sky and round the summit of a distant high column. The air is full of the clang of temple bells; it is also thick with smells. The principal smell is that of burning grease; another important smell is that of fermented radishes (suggestively called *sinki*); others are more fragrant, but intelligible only to Nepalese nostrils.

It happened to be one of the many festivals observed in this country, and so—as we were told—the people in the high carved balconies overhanging the street shot streams of water over us as we passed. Our not unnatural indignation was a little assuaged by being told it was 'for luck.' Their aim was good, and I daresay the water was fairly clean. Through the prescience of our coachman the carriage had been closed, so we escaped; not so he and his companion on the box and the footmen behind. They took their wetting unconcernedly, however, and never ceased to lacerate our ears by their loud, piercing and insistent, but strangely ineffectual, yells to clear the road.

The town behind us, a muddy road took us towards



a conical hill crowned by a white temple whose golden roof glittered above a mass of dark trees. Our horses were breasting a steep slope when the gods above, all of a sudden, emulated the balcony folk, and, with thunder and lightning, sent down such torrents of rain as one rarely sees outside Nepal. The road soon looked like a river of mud, and half-way up the hill our steaming, trembling horses came to a standstill. But the coachman would not hear our suggestion that we should turn round. His orders were to take us to the Armoury, and I think we should have been conveyed there even if we had had to swim the turgid Bishmatti River. The rain, however, ceased as suddenly as it began.

The building which, by the courtesy of the Prime Minister, we had come to see lay at the farther end of another *Maidan*, dominated by the aforesaid temple-topped hill of Swayambunath, a famous and ancient Buddhist shrine. We could see from the carriage window a steep stone staircase climbing the hill by thousands of steps, alive with ant-like streams of devotees, and caught glimpses of huge grey Buddhas amongst the trees.

At our destination a Gurkha guard from one of the Guards regiments presented arms with smartness that could hardly have been excelled at Buckingham Palace. These guardsmen are all selected big men, not the so-called 'little Gurkhas' of the Indian Army.

The curator of the Museum, a Nepalese gentleman of exquisite manners, acted as our cicerone, and led the way in. The white walls and sloping red-tiled roof of the exterior had given little indication of the labyrinth of dimly lighted galleries and chambers in which we now found ourselves. There were three or four stories connected by ladder-like stairs, and from the noise our footsteps made the whole of the interior seemed to be made of timber. The

walls were decorated from floor to ceiling with weapons ; muskets of all shapes and sizes, bayonets, swords, scimitars, *kukris*, daggers and pikes ; every conceivable instrument used in bygone days by a people whose normal occupation was war, for shooting, cutting, spitting, jabbing, braining an enemy—all arranged in intricate geometrical patterns. However old, each weapon was clean, blades bright, and the locks of firearms oiled and smooth-working as if for immediate business. The place of honour in the entrance hall was suitably given to Nepalese *kukris*, now famous all the world over. I have an admiration for the *kukri*. Compare it, for instance, with the long, lean, Afghan knife. The latter is a horrid pointed thing, used underhand with an upward stab. But the Nepalese *kukri* is a cutting blade, and therefore a brave man's weapon. It is, moreover, something more than a heavy knife of beautiful curves ; it is rather a national emblem. Made of fine steel, strong, keen, unbendable, for the Gurkha it is a trusty friend in peace or war. One seldom sees a blade decorated, except, perhaps, with a small monogram or cypher incised in the steel. With no guard, plain and unpretentious, it is what it seems to be. The Maharaja sometimes presents to his friends one of these national weapons in a scabbard enriched by beautifully figured gold. Draw it, and the blue steel, sharpened to a razor's edge, lies in your hand plain as a trooper's sword. What better emblem could a brave young nation have ?

Here were *kukris* of many shapes and sizes, from which one could trace its development to the present day shape. There is a particular pattern used for executions. Our guide took one down and balanced it in his hand. "A man's head comes off very easily, very easily," he contemplatively remarked. The sacrificial decapitation of a buffalo at a single blow is no doubt less 'easy,' but it is commonly done. A Gurkha loves practising with his weapon,



and a good man, it is said, will cut through a tree as thick as a man's arm and then take slices off the end no thicker than a cardboard.

Our attention was attracted by a long straight sword with double waved edges. The curator took it from the wall and bent it round his waist till grip and point overlapped. "This," he said, "belonged to Matbar Singh." He was a Prime Minister who met a violent end before the rise of the great Jung Bahadur. A very strong man, this Matbar Singh. The gruesome story goes that in the king's bed-chamber, where he had been summoned to his assassination, his dying kicks were such as to break a beam. The weapon in question seemed to us to be of Indian rather than Nepalese origin, and was probably intended for ceremonial rather than business. There was here another big, straight, double-handed, two-edged sword very like those one sees in the Tower of London, as used in our country 'in the brave days of old' for the defence of castle gateways and for keeping the bridge.

Next in our hands was an elephant goad, or *guybar*, as it is called, in shape like a miniature halberd, damascened in gold—surely the very weapon Mowgli found in the cavern. One could imagine 'my lord the elephant,' painted blue and scarlet, bearing on his back a silver howdah bound with golden cords—in the howdah a jewelled Maharaja, fanned by peacock plumes—being proud to be hit with such a weapon. One might, perhaps, on the other hand, imagine the thoughts in his old scarred head going back to the bygone days before that fateful *keddah*, when, standing knee-deep in water, his back plastered with mud, he spent the long day plucking up the wild rice.

Here is another find, a damascened battle-axe. We were examining it when our guide touched a spring in the weapon and there sprang out three daggers, the centre one shaped like a flame with waved edges.

We adjudged it a very thorough-going instrument of war. 'Feint cut one, press the spring and point' was evidently the idea.

Through a long echoing gallery, walls aglint with muskets and bayonets, to a room devoted to flags and trophies captured, presumably, by friendly Nepalese troops during the Indian Mutiny. It gave us a shock to see the old Queen's colours in a foreign Armoury, albeit one of a very closely allied and friendly State. Among them we noticed the flags of the 8th Oudh Infantry, the 5th Infantry (Scindia's Contingent) and other mutineer regiments. One of the bright features in that lurid page of Indian history was the change that then took place in the relations between the Indian Government and the Gurkha State, before that none of the best. It was at a time when there had appeared no rift in the dark clouds that had gathered, and the Nepalese ruler was being urged on all sides to take a leading hand in the extermination of the Faranghi. How tempting a bait that was—for success would have left the Gurkhas masters of some of the richest provinces of India—only those who know their Indian history can appreciate. Whatever the motive force may have been, sagacity, patriotism or loyalty, does not matter. Rejecting the invitations of the Indian princes and the counsels of his own court, Jung Bahadur determined to throw the weight of his country's great prestige in India on the side of the Company, and he made an immediate offer of troops; even as did the late Prime Minister in a greater emergency. The help offered was not accepted till the tide had turned, but the Gurkha troops took part in the Relief of Lucknow and fought well in the ensuing campaigns in Northern India. From that time has dated the friendship between great England and little Nepal. The camaraderie that exists between the Gurkha and the British soldier, and especially the Highlander, is well known. It



is a short step from the sublime to the ridiculous. As an instance of the sincerest form of flattery, there was to be seen at Khatmandu for years after the Mutiny a band of pipes and drums in full Highland costume. It is even whispered that sun-tanned knees received a coat of whitewash !

An interesting relic of the Mutiny is a wonderful cabuchon emerald, now the centre stone in the heavy and dazzling head-dress worn—at the cost of a headache—by the Nepalese Prime Minister on State occasions. The big emerald was originally amongst the regalia of the Delhi emperors. During the sack of the city by Nadir Shah, whose loot included the 'peacock throne,' and probably constituted a record for all time, it was successfully concealed. It seems, however, that the jewel did not escape the search of the raiding Mahrattas, as in 1857 it was in the hands of Dhundoo Punt, the Nana, otherwise known as the 'Tiger of Bithoor,' of infamous memory. At the time of retribution, the Nana escaped, and according to history books he perished in the feverish jungles of Nepal, but his wife obtained asylum in Khatmandu, and in return made a present of the big emerald to the Prime Minister.

In this chamber we saw the ancient triangular flag of Nepal with the monkey god, Hanuman, in dim scarlet, under which the hill-men marched to their victories. Here were elephants' tusks in piles, and among them a huge bone of some gigantic fish. It probably struck some great man's imagination during his travels, and so the order was given and it was carried over the Nepalese passes on the shoulders of struggling porters till it reached this resting-place in mid-Himalaya. When the geologists unearth it in some future age, one may imagine the discovery giving them something to think about.

So to the next gallery, where we observed side by side a quaint revolver-rifle, a flintlock blunderbuss damascened in gold, an English sword with

ivory grip and silver lion-head pummel, *and* a really good meat carver and fork in case ! Surmise pointed to the latter having been acquired as the latest thing in English daggers, and from the point of view of efficiency, one might certainly have worse weapons to 'dag' with. The blunderbuss was a specimen of the real old Damascus work, in which gold wire was hammered into the incised steel. In these days it is done in cheaper fashion.

Next, a gloomy hall devoted to shooting trophies, stored rather than arranged. Rows and rows of uncouth rhinoceros skulls lay on the floor, stacks of skulls of buffalo, *chital*, *sambur*, swamp and hog-deer, and among them many a notable head. Though the Nepal Terai is the finest tiger country in the world, tiger trophies were conspicuously absent, the simple reason being that tigers were so common they were just left where they fell. That was in the old days. The late Prime Minister, Sir Chandra, like his predecessor a keen sportsman and fine shot, had in his palace some enormous skins of his own shooting. One in particular is the biggest the writer has seen. To guess at the measurements would be rash, but if the twelve-foot tiger (measured properly) has ever been shot, he is there. Round the vestibule in the palace, where some of these skins are displayed, is a fine canvas in oils by an English artist depicting the tiger shoot at which King George was present as the Maharaja's guest. It was in this shoot that Sir Chandra was thrown from his elephant to the ground inside a ring of elephants which had enclosed three tigers and two rhinos ! The incident comes into the picture, though one may well believe that His Highness needed no reminding of his adventure.

To us some of the most interesting exhibits were a large number of sporting rifles of the last century acquired by the then Prime Minister. Of these only a few can be mentioned. A four-barrelled rifle with a single flintlock, the powder-pan made to revolve,

to fire each barrel in turn ; a double flintlock, with gold ornamentation by the famous Joe Manton ; a silver-mounted percussion-cap double rifle by ' Delava, Bordeaux.' The latter, with a Purdey .450, were, we were told, Sir Jung Bahadur's favourite weapons, and that is giving the makers a good certificate, for there could have been no better qualified judge. One has been hearing lately about shooting records, and in this connection I must permit myself to quote from a life of this great ruler and sportsman :—

" February found the Maharajah in the full tide of enjoyment, and apparently quite unsated with his sport, though he had in only a month's time shot more game than falls to the lot of the most sportsmanlike English duke in a whole year. During these rambles the Maharajah heard in a village that a tiger had killed three of its women, and was the terror of its neighbourhood. Ascertaining its haunts, the Maharajah ordered a buffalo to be tied to a tree near the place the man-eater was fond of resorting, but after impatiently waiting for some time, as the tiger did not turn up, he sent out his shikarees to trace out the brute. After a considerable time they brought word that they had discovered him fast asleep in a thick hedge. Jung Bahadur instantly snatched a rifle and made every haste to surprise the tiger in his dreams. The brute was rudely awakened by the lodgment of a bullet inside his head, and, on waking up, found himself in the jaws of death ! . . . By this time the season was too far advanced, and the heat of the sun was becoming rather unpleasant. So he turned back to the capital, and reached Thapathalli on April 12th, having shot 21 tigers, 11 tigresses, 2 tiger cubs, 2 leopards, 2 bears, 11 rhinoceroses, 2 stags and 1 boa constrictor ; 2 young rhinoceroses, 2 tiger cubs and 28 elephants were caught alive."

A month's bag ! The ' most sportsmanlike English duke ' also ran !

Among the many other weapons of the famous makers of Audley Street were a 10-bore double rifle with Damascus barrels no less than fifty-six inches

in length and sighted up to 800 yards (!), and a curious octagonal barrel percussion-cap rifle with the hammer underneath the lock. A double 4-bore by Swinburn of Birmingham was similar to one in the late Captain Selous's collection, used in his early days when a professional ivory trader. How these mighty old hunters managed to carry such weapons ! Another ponderous rifle was an octagonal barrel single-bore about an inch in diameter, by Joe Manton. By an ingenious arrangement it could be fired at will by flint or percussion cap. The rifle was engraved 'new improved pattern,' and was doubtless built before there was much confidence in the percussion cap, or it may be to meet the eventuality of the owner running out of caps. Another interesting sporting arm was by Crindwell (?), a single 12-bore of the percussion-cap period, but to all appearances hammerless. The hammer and nipple were concealed in the side of the lock by a plate which opened for loading—a beautiful piece of workmanship. Revolvers and pistols were here in endless variety. Besides those mentioned, we noticed the names of Hollis & Sheath, Collier, Westley Richards, Bourne & Sons, and Parker. Among those that excited our admiration were an exquisite pair of flintlock pistols by the latter maker, a breech-loading flintlock pocket pistol, and another with a concealed dagger that sprang out like a bayonet on pressing the trigger—evidently designed to provide for the contingency of a misfire at a critical moment !

A big well-lighted room at the top of the building contained a picture gallery of Nepalese and European celebrities and more assortments of ancient and modern arms. A recent sub-target apparatus, presented, I think, by K. of K. when he visited Khatmandu, was next to some steel crossbows used in the Siege of Patan, by the capture of which the Gurkhas gained the hegemony over the Himalayan



tribes east of Kashmir. Near these, Tibetan daggers, with grips of jade and crystal, and another dagger with scabbard fashioned from the horn of a Tibetan antelope and studded with turquoises. A skean-dhu, by Parker of Edinburgh, was no doubt a memento of Sir Jung Bahadur's visit to Scotland during his European tour. There are probably people living who can remember the arrival in London of the 'Nepalese Ambassador' and his suite. A ballad attributed to Thackeray, of many stanzas, describes a ball in London at which he was the 'lion.' Here are two of them :—

“ At ten before the ballroom door
His mighty Excellency was,
He smiled and bowed to all the crowd,
So gorgeous and immense he was ;
His dusky shuit, sublime and mute,
Into the doorway followed him ;
And oh, the noise of the blackguard boys,
As they hurrood and hollowed him !

The Ginerall great then took his sate,
With all the other Gineralls,
(Bedad ! his throat, his belt, his coat,
All blazed with precious minerals) ;
And as he there, with princely air,
Reclining on his cushion was,
All round about his royal chair
The squeezein' and the pushin' was.”

Balls and dinners, however, were of less interest to the Nepalese Prime Minister than the Woolwich Arsenal, to which he paid three visits. From London he went to Paris as the guest of Prince Louis Napoleon. A memento of that occasion lodged in this collection is a rapier with the prince's monogram in gold. In France also Jung Bahadur's military tastes asserted themselves. When asked what form of entertainment he would most appreciate, he staggered the President of the Republic by asking for a review of 100,000 troops, a request that was not complied

DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN POLITICAL

with—in full! He did find time, however, to see and be delighted with the dancing of one ‘Cerito,’ to whom he presented a magnificent bracelet, which, as the historian relates, and one can implicitly believe, ‘she accepted with many graceful bows.’

Passing on, our guide took us through more galleries to a room devoted to trophies captured in the Nepalese war with Tibet. The most curious of these were cannon of three or four inches calibre made of leather. The hides were apparently shrunk on to a rough iron lining one after another like the ‘skins’ of an onion; hardly producing very much strength one would have thought, but then the pressures developed by Tibetan powders were probably not excessive! There were also numbers of water-flasks made from the horns of the *gauri gau* (bison), a beast more revered in Nepal than even the rhino. One must suppose that water carried in such holy vessels produced effects similar to more interesting fluids served out to European troops. Chain armour, bows and arrows, and shields of rhinoceros hide indicated a kind of warfare which one may well wish had never been improved on, though we remarked some Tibetan iron helmets in the collection in shape remarkably like those used in the trenches during the Great War. It is a pity there were no newspaper correspondents in the great tussle for supremacy between Nepal and Tibet. The frontier between the two peoples ran, as it does to-day, somewhere about the axis of the mightiest mass of mountains in the world. But the line of highest peaks does not, as might be expected, coincide with the water parting, or the frontier. All the big rivers that descend from the Tibetan snows and find devious ways through Nepal to far distant seas, rise far beyond the axis of the range and cut their way through the barrier by deep gorges. So it was a war carried on under conditions of extraordinary

hardship, in regions where nature wears her most awesome frown. The chief operations were the investments of *jongs* (forts), guarding snow passes, and raids on 'lines of communications.' But what communications! Dizzy footpaths in a world of snow and ice, galleries along cliff faces, fords over tossing glacier-fed rivers. A 'subaltern's war,' but there were battles, too, in which the casualty lists ran into hundreds. These hillmen fight stubbornly, as we know. Some time after the battle of the Kuti Pass the bodies of a Gurkha and a Tibetan were discovered in the snow. Neither had weapons, but each man's grip was on the throat of the other. Unlike the cruel warfare, however, which one might picture among the straight-haired yellow races, a degree of humanity was shown that one might—a few years ago—have supposed to be peculiar to Europe. Tibetan prisoners were cared for by the Nepalese, and neither tortured nor starved. When the Tibetans finally gave in, a treaty, still in force, was concluded by which they accepted a subordinate position and bound themselves to pay tribute. So Jung Bahadur held a review to celebrate the peace, and, according to the local historian, he began his address to his victorious troops in stirring words: "Soldiers, officers, brothers, your valour has caused the snows to melt and the mountains to bend down their heads before you. The Tibetans who had mocked at us have by your brave arms been scattered like a flock of sheep across the Bhairab Sarpoor!"

A longer inspection would certainly have discovered to us many more interesting trophies, but our time was up. Leaving the musty-smelling leather guns, the faded flags, the chain armour, we descended the noisy spiral steps, recrossed the glittering arms' galleries and reached another portico hung with the grotesque masks of Tibetan mummers, and so outside.

DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN POLITICAL

The sun was sinking behind Nagar Jun, lighting up the scarlet uniforms of the Gurkha guard and their speckless modern arms and accoutrements. One in white garments was waiting with an armful of necklaces and bracelets of golden *champak* flowers, with which, after the pretty Nepalese custom, to garland us. Thus decorated, we made our adieux.

XVII.

SEROW.

THE glamour that surrounds a woodcock is due not only to its solitary woodland habits and the mystery of its coming and going, but also to an element of unexpectedness about the bird, a certain elusiveness. It is something of the same kind that has led to the serow being esteemed among the elect of Himalayan big game. Men that have done a good deal of shooting in that region have mostly spied a serow at one time or another, many have shot one or two, but there must be few indeed that have so much as seen half a dozen. My first glimpse of the beast was in Kashmir many years ago. We had left camp early on our way to a glen where was said to be a stag of many points. As we had far to go my rifle was in its cover on the *shikari's* broad back. On the right of the ridge on which we were walking a forest of deodars fell away to sombre depths; on our left a scarred hillside, dotted with low scrub and littered with fallen rocks, was just beginning to light up under the beams of the rising sun. What a morning! Youth, the untrodden snow, crisp and sparkling as life itself, the big stag in front! Suddenly Ramzana shouted, "Serow! serow!" A beast was bounding over the rocks below me like the very devil—and I use the simile advisedly. There he was, hoofs, short black horns, donkey-like ears, uncouth, black as Satan, with an unlustrous rusty blackness. The devil himself! Moreover, writers on Natural History,

who ought to know—about serow that is—assert that he awakens the mountains at times with an unearthly scream, and that when charging his eyes have in them a red fiendish gleam. Truth compels me to state that I have neither heard the scream nor seen the gleam, though curiously enough it happens that my several meetings with serow have all been of a kind to make the exclamation “Well, I’m d—d!” peculiarly appropriate. This may be only coincidence. The name *Nemorhædus Bubalinus* which has been given him means, I believe, nothing worse than ‘goat-antelope.’

By the time I had the rifle out of its cover and loaded the serow was far away, going across the hillside, as I have said, like the devil; over bushes and rocks and fallen trees, taking every obstacle with ridiculous ease, and, of course, out of shot. Then he was lost to view. I would have forgone my chance of the stag for that serow, as one would a shot at a tall cock pheasant for a woodcock. I never saw him again, and in many years’ shooting in the western part of the Himalaya I never came across another.

It was not till the last two years of my service, spent in Nepal, that I had another glimpse of the beast. In that country, hidden in the dense vegetation that clothes the gorges below the snow-line, serow may be said to abound. But you do not see them—not much! After all, what do I mean by ‘abound’? One or two in a glen of ten thousand acres? Perhaps. It is impossible so much as to guess. I was anxious to bag one of these beasts, for its own rare sake and for the more ignoble reason that, with few exceptions, I had shot every kind of game animal that was to be shot between, say, Baghdad and Calcutta, and of these exceptions the serow was the most notable.

My wife, daughter and self rode out one morning through the wonderful city of Khatmandu, where

streets are vistas of gold-roofed pagodas, the lights and shadows of their airy architecture suggesting avenues of cedar-trees, where at every turn you are faced by images—gods, beasts and men, of all sizes and of more than heraldic grotesqueness. The stranger rubs his eyes in amazement. The men and women a motley throng, Aryans from the plains of the south, Mongols from the steppes of the north, and that blend of the two which, superior to either, has produced the Gurkha. Then across the sacred river, whence through the morning mists we could see the massive piles of Pashpatinath and the smoke of its funeral pyres. The city left behind, we rode through miles of rich terraced fields, to where a spur of the Phulchoah range throws a dark arm into the cultivated valley. On this one of the Nepalese princes had built himself a pleasance whence one could look over the saucer-like depression and picture it as it was in bygone ages, a great blue lake lying quiet among the mountains. But not less beautiful now, for the eye could range from the vivid green of the nearer rice-fields to the paler green of those more distant, the city glittering far away in a luminous haze, while beyond on high reclined the great white Titans of the snows in a line that stretched from east to west.

In front of the building a fountain splashed into a marble tank inhabited by friendly fish that would nibble a tentative forefinger. The surrounding garden, hot and odorous with flowers, was the haunt of butterflies of unforgettable beauty; while to the hum of bees was added the cooing of wood-pigeons and the crow of jungle cocks and kalij pheasants. At dusk one heard quite close the sharp bark of kakar (muntjac), now here, now there, and by taking pains one could get a glimpse of their little red forms on the fringe of the jungle. We, my wife, daughter and self, plus a spaniel, would return from a morning's walk with a woodcock or perhaps a couple,

and so that English people mad as ourselves might lack for nothing, nature had provided round the little palace open undulating ground that only required the finishing touches of flags and holes to convert into a golf course. For the satisfaction of those who disbelieve in ointments without flies, roses without thorns and Paradises without serpents, I must admit the existence of leeches.

Narbir was a little soldier in the Legation Escort, and, being a Gurkha, was a *shikari*. I do not in this respect mean to compare him with a Tharu or suchlike jungle dweller, for he was born a tiller of the soil, and as a hunter therefore was an amateur. The real *shikaris* of Asia are not to be found amongst town dwellers or even agriculturists, but amongst pastoral and aboriginal peoples, the goatherds of the mountains, the shepherds of the plains, the dwellers in forests and *terais*. To the former nature may become an open book, the latter are themselves part of nature, Pan's very offspring. One evening Narbir turned up with two small wild men he had enlisted to explore with him the dark wooded mountains to the south, their skins bearing the marks of work among thorn and undergrowth, and the Gurkha's triumphant salute told a tale. He had not only seen a serow, but had discovered its retreat during the noonday heats. We went outside. Looking south there was a high conical hill, on the top of which was a small but very holy shrine visited by pilgrims on one day of the year. Narbir pointed upwards to where a beam of sunlight cut the blue hazy darkness. Just there, he told us, in thick jungle was an overhanging rock; below it a ledge, where a serow had made his retreat, protected from sun, rain and storms. It had been his house, his fort, his refuge for many days. But from where we were no rock could be seen even with the glasses, nothing to break the uniform greenery which fell sheer down like a curtain hung from the sky.

Our road next morning was easy for some way, as

we followed the pilgrims' track as it wound among the hills. As soon as we left it, walking was at an end. I could no longer watch Narbir's exceedingly shapely brown legs in front of me, but only his leathery heels. No doubt to an Alpinist it would have been a mere 'scramble,' and if as I suppose that is how one would describe a mouse's ascent up an ivy-covered wall, the term may be allowed to pass. We had been progressing upwards, hands, feet and toe-nails, for an hour or so, when Narbir sat down and nodded, indicating that the serow's cranny was on a level with us—and near. "How near?" I whispered. "Near, quite near." Rifle in one hand and holding on to branches and creepers with the other, I crept forward with infinite care. The woods were still, and a twig snapped with a noise that sounded terrible. A touch on my back. Narbir was pointing with his forefinger just in front. A big grey rock above me was dimly outlined through the trees, the lower part hidden by a dense tangle. If he was there at all, the serow must be under the rock and quite close. Peering about to get a clearer view, I could still see nothing. Is he lying alert and listening? Has he vanished silently away? Suddenly, through the thicket, a black shadow rose and in one movement fell over the precipice. There was a crash fifty feet below, and then a succession of crashes growing fainter and fainter. The little man laughed, as a Gurkha does under all circumstances. I looked at the spot where Nemorhædus had been lying. He had certainly chosen his retreat well. A panther might have stalked him successfully, a two-legged man with a rifle hardly. Chance the second was gone.

A few days later Narbir, in consultation with his little jungle friends, had arranged a drive. The beaters had gone off early. Our route that morning was in a different direction up a narrow valley, crossing and recrossing a stream that came tumbling and foaming over the stones. Mornings and evenings

the sound of deep-toned bells had reached us from somewhere among the labyrinthine hills, and now, following our guide, my wife and I presently found the way blocked by a temple's grey moss-covered walls. Facing us a heavy wooden door was open, and, taking the path through, we found ourselves in the temple courtyard. A masonry tank of clear mountain water fed from the stream formed the centre of the square. On the opposite side the doors of the shrine, guarded by grinning stone beasts, stood open, and we caught a faint sacrificial whiff of incense and what-not. A little Newar maid bearing an armful of flowers entered by the farther gate, and, making her way to the temple doors, disappeared into the gloom. Presently she came out empty-handed, and with a shy glance at the white strangers, left by the gate she had come in at. Here surely, amid the everlasting hills, remote and secluded, must be the abode of peace. We did not risk disenchantment by looking into the temple's dim interior, only to descry perhaps some red, many-armed monster before whom the simple offering had been laid. At Narbir's behest we left a silver coin or two at the temple to placate, if so it might be, the spirits of the glen. At that moment neither he nor we considered that other more personal spirit which is always waiting round the corner to bring on us confusion and disaster, well called the 'Spirit of the Perverse.'

Past the temple, we followed the stony track for an hour or so till Narbir halted at a point where it lay high above the stream. The opposite side of the valley was to be beaten, and our stand was below us on the hither side of the water and perhaps twenty yards above it. From here the hillside facing us rose very steeply to a high pine-fringed ridge. Just opposite our stand the dark-green curtain had been rent by a landslide, making a steep bare gash perhaps sixty yards long vertically and ten or fifteen yards

across. In this sylvan theatre we, so to speak, had the centre seats in the dress circle, the stream below was the orchestra, the naked streak of earth with properties littered about such as boulders and tree-trunks, the stage; while dark forest formed a background and wings impenetrable to the eye, so that nothing moving in it could be seen. An excellent setting if the serow would be so kind as to walk on to the stage. A big 'if'! Granted that somewhere on the mountain's broad flank a serow lay hidden, could thirty or forty beaters, or a regiment of beaters for that matter, push him on to this little open space when a thousand secret paths existed by which he could reach another glen? My morning's hopes had grown cold indeed, but I said nothing to Narbir, as the whole thing had been arranged, and the beaters were in their places waiting for the signal. To my wife, however, when Narbir had gone, I said something about the absurdity of the plan. But she—lucky woman—had the temperament of the optimist. "My dear A.," I replied, "you know as well as I do that the entire art of driving is to take advantage of a natural line of retreat. You cannot drive wild beasts where they don't want to go. It's not a sheep-dog trial. If there is a serow on that hillside can you imagine our thirty beaters in thick stuff, a hundred yards between each man——" But the beat had begun. A distant noise of shouting indicated that the men had formed a semicircle, the centre of the line being near the top of the hill, pretty near three thousand feet above the stream. Very, very slowly they came nearer. Though hopes may be faint, there is something in the noise of beating in a forest with its possibilities and anticipations and hopes and fears that 'revs up' the heart-beats of the oldest and the most pessimistic. Unlikely though it was, if I was to get a chance at all, it would probably be at a serow crossing the stage in two bounds, so I was prepared for a quick shot. When the beaters

were a couple of hundred yards or more away, there came a sudden crescendo in the noise, short shouts of excitement, and then—the rush of an animal. But he did not show on the stage. The silence that followed seemed to show that the animal, whatever it was, had broken back. Then the beaters' noises began again, and I noticed a lack of conviction in the shouts: they were of the perfunctory kind that beaters make when they know the beast has gone. And now the beaters have closed in. One can be seen at the top of the gash; some on the flanks are already out by the stream side and are lying down drinking. I got up and stretched myself after the tension.

“And that's that,” I said as I extracted the cartridges from my rifle—click, click, click. They had reached the bottom of my pocket when out of the corner of my eye I saw something that made me look sharply up. On the stage a black donkey-like beast walking, not sixty yards away! The serow was three-quarters of the way across the opening, my rifle empty. It does not take long to get a cartridge into the breech of a rifle, neither does it take a serow long to cover, even at a walk, a matter of five yards; so it happened that when I slammed home the bolt and threw up the rifle for a shot, it was not at the serow I fired in desperation, for he was gone, but at a tree behind which he had disappeared a half second before. There was another hullabaloo from the beaters as the animal burst through them and was gone for ever. Curtain? I wished there had been one!

Presently Narbir came up.

“You didn't get him?” he said.

“No.”

Eyeing the spot, “It was not far?”

“No, it was not far.”

“He was going slowly?”

“Yes,” I said, “slowly; I was not loaded.”

Wonderingly, "But I heard a shot?"

"Yes, you heard a shot. Narbir, I'll tell you all about it some other time. Now call the beaters up."

My wife walked back with me in sympathetic silence. After all—beyond the expression alluded to earlier—what was there to be said? That was chance number three, and if one may quote Mr Winston Churchill's words in a somewhat different context, 'Three times is a lot!'

The next few days I spent in 'still hunting,' a form of exercise calculated in that country to take off the last ounce of superfluous weight, but I saw no serow. Our time drew to a close, and for the last day's operation Narbir proposed a beat for the serow of the rock cranny, the black shadow that had flung itself over the cliff. It was just possible he might be back again. This time my wife and I were posted in a small ravine on the jungle-clothed hillside, whence one could get a fairly clear view for seventy or eighty yards below us, a little winding glade, as it were, about the width of a broad ride. In every other direction low trees and bushes closed us in. There we sat, quiet as mice. The beat was long and was being carried out silently; the day hot, still, soporific. Sounds reached us faintly from far below, a distant boom where they were quarrying marble for Khatmandu, the tinkle of a sheep bell. From the direction of the beaters presently there came a strange sound of movement, a rustling and a scrambling. A troop of monkeys came by, travelling on the ground and on the tree-tops. They were in no hurry, the old men were in front, behind them the general crowd. The mothers had babies clinging round their necks, adhering quite unaided, and so, unlike our tiresome children, no encumbrance at all. With the glasses one could see their wide-open eyes and wondering faces. I always think that in a monkey's face, wizened and wistful, one reads more of the pathos and unplumbed mystery of millions of

years' upward struggle than in that of any other living creature.

Stillness once more. Then a branch cracked. Another nearer. We knew that could be no serow. It seems to be a characteristic of animals living solitary lives—except the cats—to get away from danger more blindly and precipitately than those that have social instincts. Compare the headlong rush of a solitary sambur or a bull bison too old for the herd, or of a bear, with the retreat of a herd, deer, sheep, or goats. The latter may go racing, but it is with the assurance given by the multiplication of eyes and noses, with circumspection, giving the word its most literal meaning. We became aware that a cheetal stag was standing in the sun stream just below us, his spotted coat gleaming gold. Two hinds followed as he passed on. A swish through the air and a cock pheasant alighted quite close, and seeing us, ran on in a hurry. What a splendid fellow he was! In some parts the kalij is a real silver pheasant; in others he is practically an 'all black'; and there is every gradation between the two, a grey effect resulting from beautiful vermiculations of black and silver. The amount of blackness and silver in the many local varieties is believed to depend on the nature of the country, forests standing for black and open country and snows for silver, which after all is what one might expect. The Nepal bird is one of the blackest of the tribe, being black even to the crest on his head. The next excitement was a civet, striped and ringed. He was unalarmed, and went nosing about, working very earnestly for a livelihood. We seemed to be in the line of a general march past—everything except the serow.

Silence once more. Suddenly my wife whispered, "Listen!" Some eight seconds after she had uttered this pregnant remark a serow was lying stone dead at or on our feet. This sounds a little abrupt, but so was the event. The noise my wife had heard was the



first of a succession of crashes which came rapidly nearer. A black beast had burst from the bushes right on the top of us. A rifle had gone off—no time for aim. If a bayonet had been attached to the rifle the serow would have impaled himself—and there he lay. Possibly at the very last moment he turned, as the small round hole of my bullet was on the shoulder. A shaft of sunshine through the trees lit up a tiny trickle of scarlet over the rusty black coat. Poor old devil !



XVIII.

A LAST DAY ON THE HILL.

"The vapours linger round the heights,
They melt and soon must vanish,
An hour is theirs, no more is mine,
Sad thought that I would banish."

A COUPLE of miles or so to the north-east of Khatmandu a dark hill called Nagarjun stands out from an amphitheatre of mountains. From the city it has the appearance of an isolated cone, but if you climb up by the little pathway that zigzags through the forest, past the old stupa on the summit, you can see its curious formation. Below lies a grassy alp like the back of a hand stretched out from the great body of mountain behind, from which radiate long finger-like spurs, separated from one another by deep coombes. The whole is an insignificant feature in the Himalayan ranges, but a mountain system in miniature. In bygone times a Nepalese ruler had deemed it a fitting place for a royal game preserve; and it was so. A massive dry-stone wall was built about the hill, which can still be seen from below, climbing slopes, dropping down into the valleys or plunging into woodland. Higher up still you can trace the grey line of stone falling like a necklace over Nagarjun's broad shoulder. The wall is now in ruins in many places, so that the sambur and cheetal, whose ancestors were carried up from the Terai, like everything else, on men's shoulders, can get out of a night to enjoy themselves

in the rice crops below. Some of them, it is whispered, never get back again, for there are few Gurkhas who will not risk something for a taste of venison. These forest-loving beasts and the quaint little deer variously called muntjac, barking deer or kakar, affect the lower wooded slopes; while the aboriginal inhabitants, goral and tahr, the latter very scarce, keep to the higher and more open ground. From the Legation, the direct road to these grassy summits lies by a causeway across the rice-fields to Balaji, nestling among groves at the mountain's foot, and thus far you are on what might be called the Great North Road, for it is the road taken by mule caravans on their way to the Kirong Pass and on to Lhasa—or Peking. Balaji is where holiday-makers from the city love to assemble, to worship and picnic and stare at the rush of water from dragon-mouthed gargoyles, at the fat carp in the masonry tanks and, above all, at the strange figure of Vishnu lying in the clear water prone among stone cobras endowed with writhing life as breezes ripple the surface. From Balaji the hill is scaled by the pathway already mentioned.

For a day's stalking, kindly offered me by the Maharaja, which was to be my last in the East, I had decided to go by a route that was longer though rather quicker. I would ride round to the far side of the hill in the dark before morning, whence a track not too steep for a Nepalese pony would bring me into the heart of the 'forest' with the rising sun.

My orderly and I clattered on our ponies through the cobbled byways of the silent city, the enigmatic fragrances of which were subdued by the cold night air. The few figures we met disappeared ghost-like into corners, or else, being armed and having authority, stared at us as if we, ghost-like, ought to vanish too. This corner of the city passed, we crossed a bridge over the Vishnmatti River, from which the mist rose chill. Leaving a parade ground and the

State armoury behind us, the dark mass of Nagarjun rose on our right against the paling stars. On the near wooded shoulder of the hill stands the ancient and most honoured shrine of Swayambunath. In the daytime the white dome, with its crown of gold rising from the trees, can be seen from everywhere in the valley. A sort of Jacob's ladder climbs up to the temple, its innumerable steps worn hollow by the feet of pilgrims, whose procession through the centuries has been watched impassively by huge seated Buddhas half hidden among the greenery. Here too the old *chaitya* sacred to Manjusri, he who clove the mountains with his sword to release the waters which covered the now fertile valley of Nepal. A wise and kindly being this Manjusri, dwelling in mountains and forests and streams, and the guardian not only of Nagarjun but of the Gurkha kingdom. Would he be kind to us to-day? Of all this nothing could be seen as we passed, but out of the darkness came a sudden blare of gongs and musical instruments, reminding us that worship knows neither night nor day.

As our road climbed upwards, behold 'Morn, the devotee, released from the womb of night, spread the carpet of adoration before the altar of the horizon'! Sounds of life came up from the valley, a hillman's carrying call, the beat of a drum, the shrill of a conch. As we went on, our stony path became steeper, till even our active mounts had to advance by rushes. When the limit of steepness was about reached, a row of heads appeared against the skyline, and another scramble brought us to a little platform where a forest guard had their hut. Narbir, a Gurkha *shikari*, was here too, happy and smiling as usual. A cup of tea he had got ready tasted good, after which, leaving the ponies with the orderly, we started on foot. A narrow path, rising gently, here ran round a wide bay in the mountain, and could be seen for far, trending towards

a pine-fringed skyline. Its easy walking was welcome, as the slopes had that treacherous slipperiness peculiar to grass when it is dry. Presently we stopped to spy.

Where all are noble, the goral we were looking for, small in size and with insignificant horns, must be accounted among the less distinguished among Himalayan big game. But they are wary and agile, qualities which, together with their powers of scent and sight and certain superficial resemblances, have led to their being called—extremely incorrectly—the Himalayan chamois. They are found on ground that is often difficult but rarely dangerous, having as a rule none of the tremendous heights and depths that one associates with the pursuit of the *élite* of the great game of the Himalaya. It is rather the difference between a little golf links and great raking courses like Prestwick or Westward Ho! Difficulties and hazards exist, but on a smaller scale; stalks often matters of minutes instead of hours or even days. Only when the moment comes for the hunter to take his rifle in hand—or the golfer his putter—the same care is called for, the same concentration; while in both there intrudes that unknown factor without which sport would have no charm. In the Himalayas the initial difficulty is always that of finding your quarry, accentuated in the case of the little goral by their inconspicuous colouration and a habit of standing quite motionless.

It was certainly a pleasant prospect that lay before us. Mount Nagarjun in her summer raiment of green, from the green that is near to yellow to the blue-green of the pines. Indeed, if one were rude enough to look for rents in her garments, one could hardly see, on this side of the hill at least, a projecting grey rock or a brown streak of naked earth. As my glasses moved slowly over the fair landscape, details of ground passed by like film pictures on a screen—hollows, ridges, grass, bushes, stones, trees; and again, grass—ah! Though we



were in shadow, a line of sunlight was slowly descending a grassy hillside facing us on which a little party of goral stood out sharp and clear. And that perhaps is the best moment in a day's stalking! There was a buck among them, but without the long telescope, which I had not brought, it was impossible to judge whether his little black curved horns were big enough to rank him as a shootable beast. We decided to have a nearer look.

There was a succession of ridges and valleys before us, on the third of which and on somewhat lower ground the goral were standing. It seemed that by moving carefully up to a belt of wood we could reach the next deep ravine unseen, and by following this downwards for a little distance we could then climb the next ridge and ought to find the goral within easy range. The approach was duly carried out. The last bit was steep and slippery withal, and equally steep and slippery the ridge on which I lay at last with my glasses to my eyes. Three goral were standing at less than a hundred yards distance, but the buck was out of sight. We waited, but it soon became evident that we could not wait indefinitely. My feet rested on Narbir's capable shoulders, but his feet had no shoulder to rest on, and when I felt him slip a little I realised that our remaining where we were depended on adhesion, or rather perhaps on what is called the 'coefficient of friction,' and that, as everyone knows, depends on 'the material of the surfaces and their state as to smoothness and lubrication.' And further, that if we once began to slide, we would be likely to go a very long way in a very little time. There was, to be sure, no yawning abyss below us, no jagged rocks, merely some hundreds of feet of steep slippery grass; but to descend the hill like that seemed a dismal way of ending my last stalk in the East. Just when one way or another something had to happen, the buck's little black horns appeared, then his head, then his

DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN POLITICAL

body. A small one and no good! This day I had determined to shoot a worthy head or none at all. So to Narbir's unspoken but obvious grief we cautiously withdrew, leaving the little party all unaware that a shadow of danger had passed near them.

An hour or so later we had under observation a single buck that looked big. He was moving along a ridge, sometimes a black silhouette against the sky, sometimes grey against a line of *pinus excelsa*. Presently, moving a little our way, he entered a small spinney of about an acre, from which we did not see him emerge. The bit of cover in which we supposed him to be now lying filled one side of a coombe. There were several things that might be done, but after waiting some time, the plan agreed upon by our committee of two was that Narbir should go round above the spinney and give the buck his wind, or if necessary tap, while I was to post myself near to a single bush below the spinney, at a point from which I should command both sides of the coombe. To get there I had to cover some open ground, but the risk was not serious, as it seemed likely the buck had now taken up a comfortable and somnolent position for the day. The little wind that was moving favoured the project. We parted our respective ways, and after several stops to assure myself that an astonished goral was not staring at the ugly biped coming towards him, I found myself ensconced in my appointed nook. Or should I say enthroned? Just below was a little spring of water, and all around the grass was spangled with lilies of surpassing beauty. A lily called *billium Nepalensis* may be found in nurserymen's catalogues in England, and possibly this is the same, but I have felt little inclination to acquire one. It would probably languish in our climate, and a perfect memory would be spoilt. And if anyone should ask why I should not have been satisfied with the perfect



memory of that goral, instead of devising plans to 'reduce him to possession,' I would reply—somewhat evasively—that of that goral the memory is in fact all that has remained to me, for we never saw him again! He must have passed through the spinney and have gone.

Instead of the goral, Narbir put up one after another three kalij pheasants, which shot downwards over my head with astounding velocity. When I read discussions about the speed of birds, memory always recalls certain scenes. The Gilgit Himalaya: Our perch a shelf in the middle of an immense scarp of rock. A chakor partridge with a falcon close behind him shot vertically downwards over our heads with a hiss like that of falling stones, and they were gone. Whether the *shahin* struck her quarry or the partridge reached a cranny or both committed suicide, we could not see. My *shikari*, a Gilgiti, and therefore a lover of falcons, favoured the *shahin's* chance. . . . The island of Tiree: A gale of wind that tore the crests off the Atlantic breakers and a flock of golden plover travelling with a velocity that surely could not be exceeded by any bird that flies. . . . The marshes of Seistan: A blizzard of wind from Afghan snows, and geese in the air. They looked slow in comparison with the plover; but were they? . . . Scotland: Grouse over the butts with a full gale behind them. The guns, and good guns too, shooting far, far too late, and I think, except those taken behind, missing them all! . . . There shall be included in the list one very special woodcock that flashed by me down the steep side of a coombe in Nepal at a speed one does not associate with that or indeed with any member of the long-billed tribe; but perhaps in this instance the eye was deceived by the unexpected. And lastly these kalij! And what was the m.p.h. of these birds? I hardly dare guess. The speed of birds when helped by wind or gravity

must remain a matter of pure speculation until it has been ascertained what they are capable of *when flying their best* without such assistance. And that knowledge will perhaps never be ours till the odds are laid about falcons chasing electric grouse round a stadium. May the day be far distant !

Though we had walked hard, my rifle was still clean when we sat down to lunch, our backs against the old wall, which one could follow up and down to where it finally disappeared over a distant ridge. It was a perfect autumn day and one to remember. Cloud shadows sailed slowly over the hills, darkening the valleys and climbing the green slopes till they passed away on their travels towards Tibet. As I sat in the warm sunshine, from far away, floating on the air, came a musical cadence, soft, flute-like. Rising and falling it might have been a distant yodel, only there are no such yodellers in Nepal. Once before I had heard it when camping with my wife and daughter among these hills, and we were then told it was the voice of a green pigeon. Strange ! For the little sequence of notes was of so elusive a kind that all attempts to capture it were vain. A green pigeon ?—perhaps ! Fancy pictured rather some minor genius of these mountains, some elfin creature of Manjusri's, seated cross-legged in a leafy bower and trying over on his pipe a little air.

As I smoked, beguiled perhaps by this music, my thoughts drifted idly about bygone times in Asiatic highlands and the many camps my wife and I had had together, from the Zagros to Tibet. Scenes, scents, sounds succeeded one another disconnectedly. The shadow of deodars across Alpine lawns, the smell of camp fires, the hum of bees, the odour of flowers. Sunset's red glow above purple mountains ; its pink flush on a soaring peak ; dawn breaking over seas of white-crested ranges. Persia's arid plains and jagged waterless hills. I beheld again the fantastic eaves of the world, and looked down



on brown deserts dotted with sapphire lakes. Peering from the heights into voids of air, I watched the mists rising from the abyss to wreath themselves about crag and pinnacle. My day-dream carried me to a land of snow-fields and glaciers and lonely lakes, the cradles of mighty rivers; silent here under the frost, but how their lower gorges resounded! How deep their thunder with its strange undertone of cathedral bells! And the children of these solitudes, birds and beasts, they too had pages in the book of remembrance, ibex and markhor, poli and ammon and many another—'wild flocks that never need a fold.' Ah, those clean strenuous days, their triumphs and disasters! Inseparable from such musings the figures of the men who had been our servants and companions; hunters from a score of tribes; keen-eyed, weather-tanned, clean-limbed, sure of foot. Well, we shall see your faces no more. But here pause! I seem to be near the shadowy line that divides a land of happy memories from the doleful region of vain regrets. *Ai daregh* (Ah, alas!) is the Persian poet's reiterated lament for the summer that is over; but it is a Persian also who wrote—

"Though the cypress has vanished, there remains the cherry tree,
Though the tulip has faded, there is still the jasmine."

And that might be applied to present circumstances. For guns will be going off among the stubble fields, 'in England—now'; and by the time we arrive, the frosts will be stripping the covers of their yellow leaves.

Narbir was standing over me. Time to be off? We worked hard that afternoon, but saw nothing. As the evening shadows began to fill up the valleys, we were again on the little path nearing our starting-point. Stopping to take a last look round, we simultaneously spotted a solitary buck, and undoubtedly a good one. He was lying some six hundred yards below us on the edge of a bare spur that fell pretty

DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN POLITICAL

steeply to the bottom of the valley. After the manner of 'beasts,' he was looking downwards, the danger direction, and we had not been seen. We must hurry. It was late for goral to be lying down, and in the next quarter of an hour he would be certain to move. A strip of cover that began at our feet below the path ran down parallel to the ridge on which he was lying. This seemed to offer an approach, and down it we scrambled without discussion. The ground was much steeper than we expected and the cover denser, so that for most of the way it was a case of a monkey-like hanging on to branches and roots. We reached a point which I judged to be on a level with the buck—that is, if he had not moved—and under the same hypothesis he should not be more than a hundred yards away. I had hoped to find some little open space, a re-entrant perhaps in the edge of the jungle, from which to shoot, but there was nothing of the kind. Low trees overhead shut out everything. If I crept out towards the buck he would see me and be gone in a flash, for one bound would take him out of sight; while on the other side of the strip of cover the ground fell away, so that he would be hidden. And there was no time to go back and begin again. Scrambling this way and that in the hope of finding a spot to shoot from, I had made up my mind to crawl out and risk a snap shot when I found myself under a dense spreading tree—a kind of evergreen oak—and in the leafy canopy above me, shaped like a huge opened umbrella, I happened to notice a tiny hole, a rent as it might be, in the fabric. Then by moving about I found that through the hole I could actually see—yes, the buck was there, still lying down, rather above us! It seemed somewhat ridiculous, not to say improper, to shoot a beast through a hole in an umbrella, but the thought was soon overshadowed by the realisation that for my shot there was no possibility of getting

'comfortable'—even moderately comfortable. From one spot only the buck could be seen, and here the ground was too steep to sit, while a tangle of branches above made standing impossible. Now the shot that I had fondly pictured as my last in the Himalaya was something totally different. I should be lying down, elbows in soft ground; or maybe I should be sitting with my elbows on my knees, and the beast rather below me. I should be 'comfortable' and my rifle would be fairly steady. But a freak shot such as this! Fate was surely laughing at me, or was it that small imp of Manjusri's with the flute! I had it on my mind, too, that a little goral lying down facing one requires more than usually steady holding; and further, was not this in all probability the last shot at a beast I should ever take? I put up my rifle, to see the foresight, not 'resting' on the buck, but describing about him spirals and ellipses and other geometrical figures. I brought it down again. No, I could *not* get steady! The third time, as I could not improve matters, making some sort of a rest with my alpenstock, I made up my mind that, hit or miss, my rifle should go off. And this time there was a bang. The buck was gone.

"Is he hit?" Narbir asked anxiously.

"Go," I said; "you will find him at the bottom."

As I pulled, I had heard a sound for which perhaps there may be some suitable onomatopoeic monosyllable unknown to me, but quite unmistakable, the sound of a bullet striking an animal. Not only that. I had seen the merest flick of white.

I slung my rifle, relieved Narbir of his kit and turned my face to the hill, while the *shikari* took a step or two on his plunge downwards. "Wait," I said; "bring the head home"—it looks gravely down on me as I write—"give some meat to the guard and—your way lies by Swayambunath—how about a little thank-offering to Manjusri?" Narbir grinned his complete approval.

XIX.

AN INDIAN WALL-PAPER.

"I HAVE to design a wall-paper," she said, seating herself, "representing *India*. You have been there, haven't you?"

I admitted some acquaintance with the Land of Regrets.

"Well, I thought you might help me with ideas. What I thought of was a dust-coloured ground, palm-trees at intervals a foot or so apart, and under each palm-tree alternately a tiger and a cobra. Don't you think that would be effective and at the same time *quite* typical?"

"Well," I said, "something would depend on whose room the wall-paper is intended for. If, for instance, for the study of a young man who was reading for the Indian Civil Service, perhaps it might not arouse that longing for a life in the East which his parents would wish him to have. If, on the other hand, for the dining-room of the retired Colonel Chutney—'talking of tigers, I'll tell you a story, my boy'—well, it might result in his losing some of the friends——"

"Do you think," she interrupted, "it would be better to have pagoda-trees instead of the palms?"

"No," I said firmly, "there are no pagoda-trees in India now."

"That's a blessing," she said, "I shouldn't have a notion how to do a pagoda-tree."

"You know," I remarked, "that there *are* other things in India besides tigers and palm-trees and snakes?"

"I suppose there must be," she said, getting out a diminutive note-book, "*but what?* That is just what I came to ask you about."

"Well," I answered, "let me see. There are—coal mines, ironworks, railways, cotton mills, factories——"

"How stupid you are," she interrupted, "fancy putting such things on a wall-paper, even if they did exist in India, which I don't for a moment believe. You don't seem to understand. One wants to arouse in the beholder a vision of *India!* the magical, the mysterious, the dazzling, the unchanging East, the—the—coral strand, you know, and all that. Tell me about some of the wonderful picturesque natives, the babus, the tum-tums and so on. You see I do know something about them."

"You must eschew babus," I said. "It is true they have bare brown legs, but they wear white socks and patent leather shoes and are generally seen abroad on bicycles, with umbrellas to protect the head from the heat of the sun. They are not picturesque. A tum-tum on the other hand, my dear lady, is not a person, but a kind of light dog-cart in which English officers and their wives used to drive about long, long ago, before the advent of 'Tin Lizzy.' The word, I admit, has given rise to some curious mistakes. A newly-arrived subaltern was once thrown into dangerous convulsions on hearing his colonel's wife remark that she had had her tum-tum painted blue, picked out with red. But adverting to the most important people peculiar to India, one ought, I suppose, to start the list with the Viceroy. In no other country in the world——"

"How is he dressed?" she interposed.

"When I have seen him," I said, "he usually had on very smart black morning coat with trousers suitable, a white helmet, patent——"

"How dull," she remarked, erasing the Viceroy from the top of her list.



"I gather then," I said, "you don't want to hear about Members of Council, Governors, Chief Commissioners, Agents to the Governor-General, or Canal Superintendents, nor even about English people locally known as box-wallas, memsahibs or babalog."

"Nothing in European clothes," she replied with decision.

"Well, we will begin at the other end," I said. "There are many varieties of mendicants and ascetics to be seen in India, Sadhus——"

"How do you spell it?"

I corrected her orthography.

"And their costume?"

"Strictly oriental," I said. "Their hair is tied up on the top of the head with cocoa-nut fibre or something similar and dyed red. And they wear a complete suit of ashes."

"With, I suppose, those funny little bathing drawers that Indians wear in pictures?"

"No," I said, "ashes."

The Sadhu was erased as completely as the Viceroy.

"You need not be so contemptuous," I said, "most of your recent fashions come from East of Suez. Bobbed hair—Persia; a waist in a different locality to that ordained by nature—Rajputana; a curl down the cheek—Yusafzai; brown arms and legs—universal in the East; tint varies according to latitude. English girls seem to affect about 30° North. What the future will bring forth Heaven knows, though I suppose at some point the dress-makers are bound to intervene for the preservation of their profession. All the same I read of a society the other day that had adopted the garb of the Ancient Briton, without the woad."

"We don't seem to be getting on very fast," she said. "Perhaps it would be best if you gave me your own ideas for the wall-paper, that is if you have any original ideas at all."

I pondered, lit a pipe and turned my chair towards the wall. "You must have a blue ceiling," I said. "Towards the upper part of the wall, a vaguely defined band of misty purple, from which snow peaks point skyward. About the highest summits, wisps of cloud. Amid the snows the eye must catch the faint green of glaciers. Towards the left, the purple is defined as mountains, cloven, torn asunder, chasms, precipices, a desolation of stark rock and débris. On the edge of a precipice an ibex peers into blue depths. Farther to the right the mountains fall sheer, in folds, like green drapery. On a distant upland, the 'Roof of the World,' a herd of shaggy *yak*. Against the purple distance, the glint of the white walls of a monastery, very high and remote; while a far-off city with golden-roofed temples seems suspended above the world. Winding roads, worn by the feet of pilgrims and traders from immemorial time, issue from the intricacies of the mountains. On one, a caravan of long-haired, two-humped camels are carrying bales from Bokhara and Samarkand. On another a string of mules, with drivers pigtailed and slit-eyed, are laden with merchandise from far Cathay. From an eyrie among the rocks on the left, a group of cruel-featured, vulture-like men in dirty white robes and skull-caps, finger their rifles and scan the plains below and the frontier city of the north with its blue-domed mosques and gilded minarets. To the east, below pine-clothed ridges, forests of scarlet-blossomed rhododendrons, which fall into gorges of immeasurable depths. A faint mist hangs above a waterfall.

"The Terai occupies the middle distance; primeval forest this, a chaos of vegetation with creepers intertwined. There are swamps and reed-beds, the home of elephant and rhinoceros, tigers and many humbler jungle fauna. The forest is reflected in the still waters of a lake. Long-legged wading-birds fish in the shallows. A skein of wild-fowl are winging their



way from the north. Mighty rivers, glacier-born, emerge from submontane tracts and meander eastward and westward. Crocodiles bask on quivering sandbanks; white lines of geese shimmer in the mirage. On the edge of the water the bronze figure of a fisherman with his casting net. The rivers, moving oceanwards across Indian plains, become dotted with strange and picturesque craft, with upturned bows and sterns. There are cities on the banks now, seen through a golden haze of dust. Crowds of kaleidoscopic colours throng stone-paved bathing ghats. Wisps of blue smoke rise from funeral pyres.

“There must certainly be a bazaar. Overhanging balconies casting black shadows: the copper-smiths’ quarter with the red sheen of burnished metal. A bedizened elephant rocks and sways down the narrow street. In the silver *howdah*, under a red umbrella in a blaze of gold and jewels, a boy raja, handsome as the young Krishna.

“Your foreground should be India’s wide plains and village scenes, which, in the midst of change, have remained unchanged. A cluster of low mud-coloured houses; women at their grindstones garbed as in the time of the Vedas; girls filling their pitchers at the river; a ploughman urging his yoke of oxen; a mango grove shadowing a deep cool well, oxen toiling up and down to draw water in the age-old way and send it gurgling over thirsty fields. In the shade a peacock displays his iridescent hues to his soberly dressed harem. A bullock cart, red hooded, axle deep in white dust, toils along the road. A sugar-cane *khet*, near which an Indian black-buck stands alert, daintiest of all created beasts. Under the sacred pipal-tree Ganesh, the elephant god, scarlet painted, sits as he has sat for centuries. At the village temple door a Brahmin blows his conch, a troop of pink-faced monkeys his inattentive congregation.

"Of course the débris of bygone Empires and Kingdoms with which India is littered must not be forgotten. Put in, say, a battered bastion from the walls of Delhi, the great Minar of Kutub-ud-din, the Taj Mahal, rosy under the kiss of dawn, Baz Bahadur's palace on the rock plateau of Mandu. And far below Mandu show the silver line of the Nerbudda, half veiled in mist. Put in too some vast cavern, thronged with gigantic figures from India's heroic past.

"You must definitely leave some room for the jungles of the centre of India, their hills and rocky coombes, haunts of bear and tiger, their winding overhung rivers. From the greenery rises a rocky hill crowned by a fortress——"

"I should think that would be nearly enough," she sarcastically interrupted, rising to her feet ; "or is there anything else of importance ?"

"Yes," I said, "there *is*—a view seen—sometimes through a mist—by certain galley slaves whose chains have been knocked off. They look at dawn over the stern of the steamer that carries them westward for the last time. Beyond the bubbling river in the ship's wake there is a line of opalescent water, a low distant shore with palm-trees, gleaming towers, palaces, transparent and unreal. They flush for a moment and are gone—vanished in the haze like a city of dreams."

There was a silence. I turned round. My visitor was gone !



XIII.

A SCOTTISH SNIPE JHIL.

My visit to Tiree came about when, shortly after coming home—alas, never to return to the East—I received a letter in a well-known and unmistakable fist. After preliminaries it ran :—

“ Now I wonder if you will be able to pay us a visit in this island. I have always wanted to get to Tiree, but have never thought I should. However the chance came, and we took it. It is one of the most famous places for snipe, I suppose, in Europe, and has been in the hands of E. and C. for 16 years. They only came out for a short time and made very big bags, both very fine shots. The snipe are very plentiful and will be all the year. The duck are not so plentiful as they used to be for some reason, in fact just now very scarce. There are a lot of geese and it will be fun fighting them and there will be a good supply of golden plover ; but the snipe are the feature. J. and I had a nice week yesterday : 328 snipe, 13 plover, 8 hares, 4 geese, 4 blue rocks, 1 teal, 1 mallard, 1 seal. We only shot snipe four days and got 103, 111, 56, 51 and had bad weather. If—as I think—you are keen on snipe, it would be worth your while making the journey. The steamer leaves Oban at 6 A.M. three days in the week and with luck on average days you are here to lunch.”

Out of my warm carriage on the Caledonian railway into the cold, rain and murk of four o'clock on a December morning. The wind was driving in gusts in a way that made the idea of a ' crossing ' peculiarly repulsive. Someone on the platform pointed out the

blurred red light—it seemed a mile away—of the *Plover* as she lay by the wharf, and towards her I made my way, stumbling in the dark over the nautical paraphernalia that littered the quay. I was on board in ten minutes and hunting for the steward, whom I found asleep and roused to give me a blessed cup of tea. Except for him the boat, not due to start till six, seemed deserted. You could cut the air of the cabin with a knife, and, tea finished, I got the steward to give me one of the three deck cabins—away memories of the P. and O.'s lordly accommodation!—and there I reposed till breakfast, which took place shortly after getting under weigh. I sat next to the reddest faced and most taciturn sea captain I have met. I volunteered that she seemed a steady boat—most captains like that—and was told in return that I could wait before saying so till we were past Tobermory! We were in fact in the Sound of Mull, practically land-locked. The conversation did not get much further.

This skipper was, I was afterwards told, one of the war's many heroes. A gun had been mounted on the *Plover's* deck and with it he actually fought a German U-boat. Some pressed men that formed the crew, it seemed, not liking the look of things, launched a boat and made off, whereupon the German, fearing a mystery, disappeared, and the gallant skipper took his boat on to Tiree.

There were several passengers besides myself—farmers, the ubiquitous bag-man, a black-coated minister with his family, all travelling to one or other of the islands called at: Mull, Coll, Tiree, Barra.

It was light by the time breakfast was over, and one could see the coasts of Morven and Mull slipping by. I got out my glasses to spy for deer on the heathered slopes, but saw none. Out of the morning haze, four low destroyers came by in single file, mysterious as a skein of wild duck. Heaven only—and the Admiralty—knew whence they came or



whither they were bound. At the port of Tobermory there was a bustle of passengers embarking and disembarking amid the well-known din of steam-winchies busy with cargo. It was deep water right under the shadow of a little rocky height overlooking the harbour, and one imagined the bones of the *Santa Maria* (was it not?) lying far below the calm surface; though how she came to founder in so land-locked a haven seems strange. Diving operations are suspended during the winter, but I was told that the company that secured the concession has fished up enough relics to encourage them to continue operations every summer.

Rounding the headland on leaving the harbour, we met the Atlantic, and I took little further interest in the scenery, consisting as it did of a waste of ugly white-topped waves. A brief half-hour at anchor in a bay in the Isle of Coll drew me from my cabin to see a bleak rocky coast, grass-covered hills sprinkled with grey rock, and distant white farm-houses and churches standing out in a watery gleam of sunlight. A sail came scudding round a bluff and brought more passengers, including another minister with his fresh-complexioned, blue-eyed family. One hour's more tossing brought us to the stone pier of Scarinish, the principal harbour of Tiree. Vessels used to anchor in another little harbour close by, and one can see the bones of one of these lying there now within a stone's-throw of the fishing smacks pulled up on the white sand, but the entrance was dangerous and modern conditions necessitated, along with many other changes in the island, the construction of a solid pier, though even now, as I found later, boats cannot get in in bad weather.

As I emerged from my cabin, I discerned my host's figure on the pier. He was a sportsman, that with every opportunity of enjoying the best throughout his life, has sought out the roughest and wildest shooting these islands can afford, and it can be

very rough. Anderson, the keeper, was with him, one whose figure and light walk from a distance betokened a hefty boy rather than one who has left middle age far behind him. For this he may thank the air of Tiree.

When the talk came to snipe, it seemed that the weather had been so bad and the bogs so full of water that it was thought best to wait for some improvement before disturbing the ground where the biggest bags were usually made. To-morrow, it was fixed, we were to go to Bhasapol, one of the drier beats on the west side of the island. To-day, weather permitting, we were to try for geese and duck near the Lodge. As the stout island cob took our trap round the sandy bay, the gale was taking the tops off the waves in spray and I could scarcely open my eyes to look at the country. We passed some low white cottages with round thatched roofs, immensely thick walls and deep, embrasure-like windows. The next thing to notice was that the whole island—or rather so much of it as one could see—with its close-cropped, beautiful green turf and rolling hills, looked like a golf course. There are at least two golf courses on the eastern side of the island; the western side is more heathery and dotted with numerous lochs. Visitors from Glasgow and elsewhere come and play in the summer, putting up in the one inn at Scarinish, or else in the farm-houses.

It was a relief to get out of the tearing wind into the comfortable Lodge on Gott Bay, with two exceptions the only 'house' on the island, one of these being the aforesaid inn.

We went out that evening, past the grey ruins of two little stone churches dating from St Columba's time, to a point where a rocky ridge gave shelter from the gale. There we sat down and spied over a broad expanse of yellow grass, dark heather and lake, as long as we could see and use our glasses. We saw some geese, but unapproachable. We also heard



the musical wild note of whooper swans. Though we saw none that evening, we saw some afterwards and might have shot them too, but they are protected on the island. As for duck, there are plenty of many kinds, but there is so much water about, that though one could probably get a few if one took trouble over it, the bag would look poor against a very moderate day in India, and after all snipe is *the* thing in Tiree.

We had evil luck with the weather. Next day there was a gale with rain from the south-west that one could hardly stand against. I struggled out in the evening, determined at any rate to see snipe, and put up a few from the ditches near the house and found a few in the half rotten seaweed put on the fields as manure. They whirled off in the wind at a terrible rate, and I returned with a couple only. The second day we had decided to have a day after snipe, not 'wind and weather permitting,' but 'anyhow'; and fortunately, though nothing to boast of, the weather had improved a little. Two 'country' traps took us—host, hostess and me and Anderson—to the Bhasapol beat, eight miles. On the road there, geese were spotted grazing—they say two geese will eat as much as a sheep—but goose-like they out-manceuvred us. Farther on, a lot of wild duck, among the yeasty waves of an arm of the loch, again wasted our time. At one point the road, where it ran for a short way some forty yards distant from the waves of the Atlantic, was littered with huge boulders hurled up by the ocean during a storm. That road, we thought, would not be pleasant under such a barrage.

The ground we walked over that day consisted of stretches of yellow grass, dykes, boggy moor-land and wet hollows among the round hills, where the ground was carpeted with the wild yellow iris. Earlier in the season, these iris beds, some of them acres in extent, afford the best cover for snipe, but the iris crop is cut by the islanders for thatching, and at this time was a

low stubble from which the snipe rose very, very wild.

It was most difficult shooting. There was the wind; the fine rain; cold, wet fingers. I had on a new macintosh, too stiff for quick shooting. One rarely heard a snipe 'scape' as he rose. The light was bad. In short I realised once more that this was a totally different proposition to snipe-shooting in India. Those calm halcyon days, the good light, the freedom of light clothes, the comparatively easy birds! In India it is a common experience to watch a snipe when put up, take a flight in the air, circle round and pitch again within a few hundred yards. In Tiree, I never saw a snipe behave in such a way. Once up, they were to all appearances off to America. My host, with his greater experience, said that to see a snipe pitch again was most unusual. The 'going' was certainly good, better far than in most Indian *jhils* of my acquaintance. There are on the island quaking and dangerous bogs, but they are known and avoided. As the reader will perhaps have surmised, the Indian *shikari's* performance with those snipe of Tiree was poor stuff—and it was not till toward the end of my visit that I began to regain such form as I was capable of. I will say something about British compared with Indian snipe later on.

At lunch-time we arranged our waterproof garments under the shelter of some rocks and sat on them. There were occasional gleams of sun by then, and the rain stopped for the day, but the wind was inexhaustible—salt, cold, dustless wind—how one could have done with a breath of it in the East sometimes! In the afternoon we crossed a corner of a big, flat, low-lying plain, that formed a girdle across the island, the 'Reef' it was called locally, why I know not, for no one could tell me. Here we put up a few snipe, a big proportion of them jacks, out of the ditches cut to drain the 'Reef,' but even the little jack lay badly to-day, so that by the time



we got into the traps and jogged home in the dusk, to tea and hot baths, the bag was but twenty-eight.

There was no improvement in the weather during the next few days, and it became evident that, even given fine weather towards the end of my ten days, there would be too much water to do well on any of the good bogs. We had, however, some most interesting walks after snipe, without touching the best ground, giving me an opportunity of seeing something of this queer island, 'like a raft' as someone has picturesquely put it, 'anchored in the Atlantic.' Much of the island is, as I have said, covered with smooth turf, cropped short by rough Highland cattle, that remind one vaguely of yaks, and by Cheviot and blackfaced sheep; but the turf is so thin that if it gets torn, the farmers put cinders down to prevent the wind scouring the hole into a sand bunker. At one place we tramped over miles of long dry yellow bent, in which we found snipe taking refuge from the wild weather. There are numberless lochs with little islets towards the rocky west coast, and in this direction, in spite of the fact that there is not a tree on the island, an occasional woodcock is put up. But whatever the walking may be, grass, heather or tussocks of sea-pinks, one could always expect to put up a snipe. Dominating all was the voice of the Atlantic. We were never out of hearing of its unmistakable deep boom, and from most places in the island, looking westward, one could see the spray rising and falling in white ghost-like columns.

There is not a snake, frog or toad on the island; no grouse nor ptarmigan: no partridges. The latter were introduced some years ago, but were probably killed off by peregrines. Shore and wading birds there are, of course, in hosts, including most of the plovers, whimbrel and curlews ('whaups'). The latter are seen in great flocks, but we did not take trouble over them, and you will not shoot curlew without taking trouble. We did not go out of our

DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN POLITICAL

way after golden plover either, though we had an occasional bang into a flock as they passed us at a hundred miles an hour. Surely golden plover are among the fastest birds that fly !

We had a fine day at last and made an expedition to the big bog that lies between Ben Haymish and Ben Hogh, the two ' mountains ' of Tiree, neither of them more than 460 feet above sea-level. Barranpol was the name of the nearest village and church, and for us Barranpol was the name of the bog. It lay at the southern end of the island. If one pushes on a few miles from there, one comes out on the iron cliffs of Caen-a-Mhara, with caves below, the resort of thousands of blue rocks. From the cliffs on a fine day one could see far out the lighthouse, built by the father of R. L. Stevenson in circumstances of extraordinary difficulty and danger, so it is from first-hand knowledge that the author in ' The Merry Men ' was able to paint in his inimitable way the storms and tides and fierce currents that surge round these islands. Tiree has, of course, a small but select literature of its own, beginning with the journey of Samuel Johnson.

Anderson, with Bob, met us at the village of Scarinish. Bob was a big strong Labrador, a wonderful dog that ran on his own feet the ten miles to Barranpol, making it at least fifteen, worked all day, and ran back in the evening, fresh and ready to fight with any stray shepherd's dog he met. Fetching snipe is with most retrievers a perfunctory rather than a joyful business. I have never seen a dog so keen on the job as old Bob. He rarely failed to mark and find them, however far away they fell, and bring them to hand in his cavernous mouth, more suited, one would have thought, to carrying a big red hare. The bog could be seen some way off, a dark patch surrounded by a broad belt of yellow grass below the slopes of the ' mountain.' We circled round to take it down wind ; for whatever



one may do in the East, or theory one may hold about the way snipe rise, in Tiree, anyone that would walk ground expected to hold snipe otherwise than down wind, would be considered daft. The going was the worst I had experienced on the island, knee-deep, soft and holding, and giving that rather unpleasant feeling that one may be let in deep any minute. We put up no snipe till near the edge of the yellow grass. G. then got a shot and scored, then I likewise. In the next twenty yards we got a few more, but at each shot fired, scores got up out of range and left the bog. By the time we had got three or four couple, there was not a full snipe left on the big bog. Too much water was the matter. But what a spot under better conditions! C. and E., the previous tenants, both certainly unusually good shots, once got on this spot 113 in an hour and a half, and 150 by lunch-time. My host, earlier in the season, always shooting with one other gun, frequently got over the hundred.

There was another bog a few miles away to be looked at in the afternoon. So we made towards it, shooting along the wet ditches and boggy bits, but the total by the time we sat down to deal with the luncheon basket was only 25. The afternoon's bog was the most ideal spot for snipe I have seen anywhere. Acres and acres of yellow grass, good sound walking, water rarely above the ankle, snipe in thousands. That is to say, I must have seen well over a thousand snipe, but it was the same story; too wild. Squark, squark (how on earth can one write the noise a snipe makes!) up they would get, 40, 50, 100 yards away, single birds and whisps. We tried driving, the guns going forward, but there was little concealment and it did not repay the loss of time. We finished up at dusk, close to the 'island house': an old fortified building on an island on a loch with a drawbridge to the land. It has now been modernised for the residence of the Duke of

Argyll's factor. Our bag was 52, about half what G. had hoped to get. We were both shooting pretty well that day, so that I think I may say that first-class shots would not have got a very great many more. During the day we never walked the same ground twice, and there appeared to be any amount more just as good as what we had done.

It was on this ground that the record bag of snipe for the British Isles was made on 29th October 1906, when the two guns already mentioned got 249. Two years later, between 26th October and 6th November, they killed 1292 snipe, their best day being 217.

May I here hark back to the question of Indian and British snipe-shooting and break a lance on this particular point with the writer of that most excellent series, 'The Game Birds of India,' a work of whose general merits it is impossible to speak too highly. Speaking of a *whole season's* snipe-shooting, the author suggests that "the man who gets one bird to every two cartridges expended may *call himself* a good shot, he who finishes up the season with an average of two in three is a good shot, whilst the man with an average of *three in four* is hard to beat and may consider himself a really crack shot." Good heavens! Mr Baker then goes on to give instances of even better shooting than this, and though it is but fair to say that he generally allows that the the average snipe at home is wilder, flies faster and twists more than he does in India, he appears to think that matters are equalised by the advantages of shooting in a British climate. I showed this article to G., than whom no man knows more about snipe in the British Isles. "Well," he said, "such shooting as that would be impossible here. C. and E., my predecessors, were two of the finest shots in England. C. was, I suppose, one of the best ten. I asked Anderson what was the best bit of shooting he had seen, and he mentioned one morning when they



went out with a round hundred cartridges apiece and came back with 98 snipe."

The whole season's average, one may suppose, would be rather worse than this. Well, a man that is among the best ten shots in England must be very good indeed. It would be absurd to say that a better shot might not exist in India, but it is indisputable that the standard of shooting at home is much higher than it is in India, for the very simple reason that there are far more shooting men in England who fire ten thousand cartridges and more a year, than there are in India who fire a tenth that number. If Mr Baker had in his mind snipe-shooting in Bengal or Ceylon, where I am sure they are easier than in more northern parts, he might possibly be not so far out, so far as India is concerned; but as regards the British Isles, I personally should modify Mr Baker's dictum to read, "calculating on a season's shooting, the man who gets one bird to every two cartridges may not only 'call himself,' but *would be*, a really crack shot in any company!"

I had one other fairly good day before my time was up and I had to get back south for Christmas and holidays. We got 48 only; so though the richer by a most interesting experience, I was far from seeing the best shooting Tiree can afford. For this the weather was to blame; and now the same evil agency would not allow me to leave the island. For days no steamer could touch. Never since experiencing the '*bad-i-sad-o-bist-roz*' of Seistan had I felt such push in the wind, though in other respects there was certainly little enough resemblance between the two. The annoying part was that shooting was out of the question. The islanders are used to being stormbound and are philosophic accordingly. "Och," they say, "what is a handful of minutes when you come to Tiree!"

I eventually got on the first steamer that touched,

DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN POLITICAL

though it was outward bound to Barra, but as its being able to get into Scarinish on the return journey was problematical, I ventured the extra hours. Looking back over the *Plover's* heaving stern and regretfully thinking of the comfortable Lodge and my kind hosts, I watched the island disappear in tearing scud and spindrift.

XXI.

A GOOD DOG.

PANDORA is a compact little Labrador lady. During the lazy months her figure is somewhat rounded, but in the shooting season ripples of muscles stand out like watered silk. An expert might say her eyes were too dark, her ears a trifle big, he might object to a spot of white on her chest. Let it be so. Eastern wisdom says, 'Musk is not that which bears the name of musk, but that which has the scent of musk'; we put it less picturesquely, 'Handsome is as handsome does.' When suitably spoken to, Pandora replies with a toss of her head, a trick inherited from a mother of whom I will tell a story. After winning in Field Trials she was—I must confess it—sold for money and found a happy home. Two years later we went to see her and her black puppies. Recognition, delight we expected, but that was not enough. When the visit ended she jumped into her former mistress's car and, forgetful of her family, refused to move till, protesting with all the strength of her four paws, she had to be dragged out. It was a saddened party that drove away, in our hearts the determination 'Never again!'

Pandora is a 'good' dog, by which I mean much the same as when I speak of a good child; for many dogs do seem to be able to choose which two of opposite courses of action, dictated respectively by conscience and instinct, they will follow. In the 'bad' dog (or child) the latter is the dominant

influence, and it matters little whether you call it by the old-fashioned name 'original sin' or prefer the modern term 'self-expression.'

So dogs have 'free will'? The late Professor Ray Lankester once commented on the proposition: "Can a fish avoid biting if you give him the right stimulus under the right conditions?"

"The proper reply to that" [he wrote], "is by another question. 'Can a fish, or a man, or a fly (or a dog) avoid any course of action if you give him the right stimulus under the right conditions?' Unless by 'right' is meant 'wrong,' the inquiry is nonsensical. The existence of inhibitory and accumulative mechanisms in the nervous structure of lower as well as higher animals, by which the action of the simple direct reflex mechanisms is arrested or modified, is well known. There is no justification for introducing the words 'voluntary' or 'choice' or the conception of will."

But let me return to Pandora. She is a 'shooting man's dog.' She will push out a rabbit and then see it away and shot without a move. But when I say she requires no handling and no lead, a Field Trial purist might possibly protest. I have a good stand. Over the dark belt of firs against the blue sky pheasants come streaming. Pandora trembling beside me intently watches each one and gets very anxious. "Such a lot to pick up," she tells me. Some lie in the open. One in a patch of red bracken far behind, one in a hedge, another in the adjoining cover. One has towered and fallen two fields away. "Can I remember them all?" Ah, a cock, the sun gleaming on the copper of his breast, hit too far behind, slopes down, lies a moment, then picks himself up and begins running as cock pheasants can run. More birds come. I look round. Pandora has departed like a shadow. Minutes go by and the drive is over. No Pandora! A friend ventures on some well-meant words of sympathy. Presently a black

dog pushes through a hole in a distant hedge. Here she comes, the cock, with neck outstretched, in her mouth. "Forgive me," she says with eyes and tail, "you saw how it was. *That* bird would have been lost." I call her a bad dog—but do I mean it?

A wood-pigeon once crashed down among some high trees in a wood and Pandora was sent for it. She found some feathers and as she was investigating them, up from under her very nose jumped a rabbit which she watched away with a curious expression of puzzlement. What was in her mind? The pigeon had turned into a rabbit? Self-questionings: '*Ought I to have caught that rabbit?*' Anyhow, she would not hunt more for the pigeon, which, as a matter of fact, was securely hung up on a high branch.

I suppose good dogs sometimes incur the dislike of their more ordinary, sinful kennel companions. Once Pandora, having been given two biscuits for her meal and feeling one was 'quite sufficient, thank you,' took the other biscuit and put it back in the sack in the other room from which it had been taken. I wondered what the hungry spaniels who 'had not had nearly enough' thought of this procedure. Here I imagine a reader muttering, 'One best dog in the world and everybody has got it.' So I feel bound to tell a story entirely to Pandora's discredit. She was being handled by her mistress at some Field Trials, and it happened that the gun behind whom she was 'down' was completely 'off colour.' Pheasant after pheasant went away untouched—birds that ought to have come down, as Pandora knew. She did not whine—that is a thing she has never done—but as the last few birds were saluted with the same absence of results, with a depth of anguish in her eyes she groaned, not only in spirit, but aloud. The 'gun' looked round at the dog and laughed, and that, I think, spoke better for him than it did for Pandora.

Of course these extra-conscientious dogs (like extra-conscientious children) do sometimes make themselves

rather ridiculous. I once had a stand—it was an October day—in a ride with tall trees before and behind. A high cock pheasant falling some way behind me struck a branch and was decapitated. When the drive was over Pandora fetched one after another the four birds I had shot, among them the headless cock. Then, though the tally was complete, she plunged back again into the greenery. Presently she brought something up in her mouth which she put into my hand. It was the cock's head! Of course I did not laugh at her. Now an ordinary dog would probably have taken no notice of the head. A still more ordinary dog might have eaten it.

One last story, about which I shall venture on no explanation whatever. Pandora, with a litter of pups about two months old, was in a separate kennel, the door of which on a fine summer's morning was left open to the garden. Her mistress passing by heard her growling and peeped in. Surrounded by an excited group of her children, she was lying with a half-grown and very lively young pheasant between her paws, which, being rescued, ran away unhurt into the shrubbery.

Human beings and the lower animals. Some say, 'The gulf between them is immeasurable.' Others, very bold people these, have ventured on the suggestion that living creatures were first given souls when they could distinguish between right and wrong. I should like to think that there was some truth in that belief. I should picture Pandora before the Beautiful Gate, on her face an anxious expression, her tail held rather low, the tip wagging in a rather deprecating manner; and then I should see the door opening, just wide enough to admit the soul of a very good dog.



XXII.

A DILEMMA.

THE more one thinks about it the more difficult it is to arrive at any conclusion about the ethics of killing. Thoreau describes how, when he and his companion were about to make a meal off squirrels, he threw away their little bodies in a sudden flash of compunction: 'Behold the difference between the one who eateth flesh and him to whom it belongs. The first hath a momentary enjoyment, while the latter is deprived of existence.' Yet, when in another place he praised the 'venerable arts of hunting and fishing,' I do not suppose he was more inconsistent than most of us. It is a complicated problem.

In this quiet country spot I find myself involved in tragic events which are fast moving towards a catastrophe, and I shall not be able to absolve myself of responsibility. There lives in an out-house in our garden a black and white cat, worshipped with almost Egyptian devotion by the gardener and his wife. Fortunately the affection they bear for this animal does not extend to her progenies which, following one another with minimum intervals allowed by nature, are drowned remorselessly as soon as they see the light.

I who have little affection for cats in general, have none at all for Felix (her absurdly inappropriate name), for we often find in the garden evidences of her savagery where our little bird friends have lost their lives. Yet when I mention these incidents to

the gardener and hint that it is hardly decent that a mother should outlive so many children, he interrupts me with stories of the monumental number of rats she has killed and eaten, their size and hunger. If he is to be believed it is in fact Felix alone who stands between us and the fate of Hamelin town in Brunswick. For my part, whenever I see her in our part of the garden, trotting stealthily from bush to bush, I make the most frightful noise I can manage—rather like escaping steam—and hurl a stone with all my force. Though I have always missed her by yards, she avoids me in this area. In the out-house, her own domain, she does not stir but lies regarding me with cold implacable eyes.

I must admit that my dislike for Felix is not unmingled with admiration. Heaven knows I am innocent in the matter, but I have seen three Labradors and two spaniels converge on her when thus lying in a terrific rush, but they all abruptly stop short within a yard of her, and she does not even unfold her paws. Only from somewhere in her interior comes a dull noise of infinite menace which might be that of a wound-up infernal machine. These cats! In all the world—mankind excepted—does their equal exist for craft, courage and cruelty? Qualities seemingly possessed by cats in inverse proportion to their size and weight; for as the tiger is excelled in these respects by the panther, so is the panther by the common cat. If the human race were to disappear from off the earth, I wonder whether after æons of time their place as 'lords of creation' would not have been taken by some remote representative of the feline race!

The antagonism between myself and Felix has become more marked since the red squirrel Rufus came on the scene. He was first observed among the pine-trees opposite the front door. He then took to sharing with the birds the crumbs thrown from the kitchen window. From here it was but a short step



to the bird table outside our dining room, and, when a gangway had been fixed, he ventured first as far as the window-sill and then into the room. Nuts were the attraction, and these, if cracked, he consumed on the premises, but if in the shell he took them away to bury. Now he generally looks in at breakfast time, first on to the floor, then up a ladder-backed chair and so on to the table. No stupid unimaginative tameness is his. Far from it! He moves with little sudden, bird-like impulses. When he sits with his tail cocked over his back, his big bright eyes like a woodcock's look behind him and everywhere at once. A sudden movement, an unexpected noise, including somewhat curiously the crack of a nut, someone moving towards his line of retreat, and he is gone. Yet a valiant little soul. When contemplating some new and really venturesome step he has a way of flourishing his tail, a waving of flags as it were to screw up his courage—'Now for it! Come what may!'—and on he goes.

Will Felix one day 'for a momentary enjoyment' deprive our Rufus of his existence? The gardener says no, Felix would not dare; squirrels can look after themselves. But he is biassed in the matter.

Lately, perhaps owing to association with carnivorous creatures, Rufus has taken to helping himself to fried bacon off the breakfast table. Will this strong meat affect his character? Will it enable him to defy the black and white cat? In support of such a view, I have a recollection of a tribe in Central India who ate tiger's meat whenever they were afforded the opportunity, in the confident belief that it endowed them with courage and strength of mind and body. Their wives, it may be whispered, were not allowed any tiger's meat. The theory is attractive but it is a frail foundation on which to build hopes for Rufus' safety.

What is to be done?

.

DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN POLITICAL

A month later. The question whether man should step in to solve the problem according to own desires—to kill or to keep alive—was still under discussion when fate stepped in. Rufus came on to the dining table one morning with swollen head and half shut eyes. He had difficulty in eating his nuts and was evidently a sick squirrel. The next day he could hardly eat at all and lay down in a dark place under the sideboard. He then went out through the window, moving with difficulty ; then he lay down for a few minutes in the *stylosa* bed and went stumbling off. It was his last visit. We never saw him again.

The cloud that at one time overshadowed Felix lifted.



XXIII.

FIELD SPORTS AND ETHICS.

"OH! how that beautiful word fox gladdens me 'heart!" exclaimed Mr Jorrocks. "In the summer I love him with all the ardour of affection; not an 'air of his beautiful head would I hurt; but when the hautum comes, then dash my vig, 'ow I glories in pursuing him to destruction." The creator of the immortal Jorrocks probably little knew that he was putting into his cockney hero's mouth a sentiment old as the days when man worshipped and sacrificed to the powers of Nature—old as the sun myth, the corn myth, old as magic itself. It may be supposed, too, that few of the press men who, towards the close of summer, begin writing to the papers about 'St Grouse's day' and 'St Partridge's day' consider how ancient a belief they are echoing.

In those far back days, as Sir James Fraser¹ has shown us, it was no uncommon practice for people to deify their kings, and also to slay and even eat them. The same class of belief existed with regard to birds, beasts and fishes. Men worshipped and devoured them.² Exactly what crude thoughts underlay these practices can only be guessed at, but it seems that there was some idea that death was not wholly an injury. Eating and being eaten

¹ 'The Golden Bough.'

² Similar beliefs still exist in some countries. In Nepal, for example, the rhinoceros is sacred; but he is hunted and killed, and every scrap of the meat is eaten.

were different aspects of the same thing, as concave and convex surfaces are different aspects of the same curve. Diana was goddess of hunter and hunted. There was present also, it seems, the consciousness that death before the setting in of decline—death at the summit point of existence—was best. The latter idea is not unknown to-day. John Nicholson—to mention the first name that comes to mind—would never have attained his apotheosis in India if instead of being killed at the moment of his triumph he had retired on a pension and died in his bed.

Then in those struggling brains there seems to have arisen some feeling of sympathy with the condemned kings and animal divinities. Perhaps, after all, death might not be altogether welcome to the objects of their worship. So the king was given a chance, an opportunity, of defending his life. The animals to be slain were placated with apologies. We read how the Indian Bear Clan, at the ceremony of killing the bear, thus craved his pardon: 'Cherish us no grudge because we have killed you. You have sense. You see that our children are hungry. They love you and wish to take you into their bodies.' A similar sort of idea about the relations of eater and eaten may be traced in the story of Ali, the son-in-law of Mohammed, and the flat-fish. On going to drink at the stream side Ali found that the flat-fish had stirred up the mud. In the hasty way that prophets had, he cursed the flat-fish so that they should no more have the *privilege* of being eaten by the Faithful. It is an integral part of the idea that the victim lived again in the bodies of his worshippers. And if exception is made in the matter of personality, which we know very little about, the notion is not far removed from fact, for living animals, we are told, can subsist only on organic substances that have once been alive. The death of the individual is, in short, necessary 'in the interests of a larger

whole.' It is very evident too from the pictures engraved by ancient cave-dwellers that they had a real sympathy with their animal victims. It thus becomes clear that the love that sportsmen of this century have for living creatures, including those they kill, is not a hypocritical invention of their own to excuse in some way their wicked deeds, but a hereditary sentiment of nearly equal antiquity to that of the hunting instinct itself.

I do not mean to imply that heredity affords a valid excuse for actions that are wrong in themselves ; for along with instincts we have free will—or we think we have. A very eminent Churchman, Bishop Gore, speaks of these instincts thus :—

"There subsist in us, with varying degrees of force, ancient, savage and animal tendencies and instincts such as conscious reason has tended to submerge and exclude (more and more completely the more rational and self-conscious one's life becomes), but which are never quite extinguished."

And in another place :—

"We are encompassed with the sense of what ought to be. Moral goodness exists, but under conditions of continuous and sometimes desperate struggle, and in each individual with more or less manifold imperfection. But whatever its struggles and imperfections, goodness, we are convinced, is what ought to be."

Now one of the most powerful, as well as the most ancient, of these savage and animal tendencies, second only in urgency to that of reproduction, is the instinct (if we may so call it), shared with beasts of prey, that leads men to slay creatures for food and clothing—to exploit to their own advantage, in fact, all the living creatures on the earth that have been supplied by 'a bountiful Providence.' Indeed the killing and eating of the lowlier inhabitants of the

earth has been held to be, and by some is still believed to be, a divine ordinance :—

“ The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea ; into your hand are they delivered. Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you.”

But if selfishness is wrong, as conscience affirms it to be, in respect to individuals, classes, nations and races, must it not also be condemned as between man and the lower orders of creation ? And we cannot stop here. Judged by the touchstone of ‘ what ought to be,’ what shall we say about the whole world process, evolution, the struggle for existence—that process, based on selfishness, which is around us everywhere and by which man has attained to what he is, not excepting his civilised conscience, his supreme court of appeal ? A queer world indeed. Such questions lead us into deep quagmires. Hindu philosophers, overcome by the consciousness of an endless chain of wrong, not only between man and man but between man and beast, believe that our world is passing through a temporary but somewhat long period (432,000 years) called the *Kaliyug*, or dark age. The Jains, a kindly and gentle sect, hold that taking life of any kind is wrong, and, so far as I am aware, they alone of all people who hold such beliefs do their best to put them into practice. They not only abstain from meat, but abide the vermin on their persons, while in order to escape the guilt of injuring even the humblest of living things they tie muslin over their mouths and round their candles. Since the Jain does not see the still smaller insects that pass through his net, he is presumably content—unless he argues *de minimis*. Some day he will learn that mere existence involves the destruction of countless micro-organisms that



have in them the germ of life. What then will be left him but existence as an eremite, in a cave perhaps among Himalayan snows, whence he may look out with amazement on the world of which he so profoundly disapproves? Gautama Buddha travelled further along this path than the Jain, for he offered his body to a starving tiger, and was promptly eaten. The supreme sacrifice! The supreme morality! And so we arrive at a *reductio ad absurdum*. Can our premises be wrong? Is selfishness, as some say, a duty? Ought it *not* to be 'stuff of conscience to do no murder'?

Though unselfish ideas like those of the Jain have no survival value and might be expected to disappear along with other useless or pernicious brain-waves, the odd thing is that they have a way of persisting and even of gathering strength. 'Moral values,' it has been truly said, 'are not destroyed by the belief that the world process is inimical to their realisation.'

So one sits in what Eastern people well call 'the swing of thought.' As its oscillations become less violent one seems to see the age-long struggle between Ahriman and Ormazd—the world of fact and the world of values. Some day there may exist on earth a Kingdom of Righteousness in which 'there shall not hurt nor destroy'; but if so, it is a long way off. To realise its infinite remoteness is not to decry moral effort. The traveller in a desert may be guided by a star without having any idea of reaching it. He may not even keep his eyes fixed on it too steadily. His feet are bound to the earth, and he must pick his way among dunes and crags and precipices as best he may. In the meantime, for us here and now, in this '*Kaliyug*,' a working philosophy is needed, and perhaps we—at any rate, those who are young and not driven to thought—might do worse than listen to Stevenson's cheery optimism. What does he say to Jains and recluses

DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN POLITICAL

and all those who disapprove of the world of fact ?

“ And ye, O brethren, what if God
When from Heav’n’s top he spies abroad,
And sees on this tormented stage
The noble war of mankind rage :
What if his vivifying eye,
O monks, should pass your corner by ?
For still the Lord is Lord of might ;
In deeds, in deeds, he takes delight ;
The plough, the spear, the laden barks,
The field, the founded city, marks ;
He marks the smiler of the streets,
The singer upon garden seats ;
He sees the climber in the rocks :
To him, the shepherd folds his flocks.
For those he loves that underprop
With daily virtues Heaven’s top,
And bear the falling sky with ease,
Unfrowning caryatides.
Those he approves that ply the trade,
That rock the child, that wed the maid,
That with weak virtues, weaker hands,
Sow gladness on the peopled lands,
And still with laughter, song and shout,
Spin the great wheel of earth about.
But ye ? . . . ”

Let it, however, be conceded that, weighed in the balance of ‘ what ought to be,’ there is wrong involved in killing for our profit or pleasure. But there must also be degrees of guilt. At one end of the scale, the Jain and others like him ; at the other, those who are deliberately cruel. The Jain, as we have seen, does his best—short of suicide—and no one can do more. The question that concerns us here is the position in this hierarchy of cruelty occupied by the sportsman. To me it seems quite clear that if people were to be divided into two classes—society at large on the one side and sportsmen on the other—the latter, apart from their being members of society, have nothing to fear from any



comparison that could be drawn between them. Indeed, if the matter be considered without prejudice, it can hardly be questioned that of all the many ways in which man exploits the dumb creatures of the earth for his own advantage, the methods of the sportsman are the most humane ; or perhaps it should rather be said the least brutal, the least callous, the least cold-blooded.

Let us first glance at some of the cruelties of sport. Fox-hunting and coursing are perhaps most often condemned, the assumption apparently being that fox and hare undergo sufferings similar to those that human beings would experience in like circumstances. But anthropomorphism of this kind is not justified. Though one cannot know, one may reasonably infer the feelings of other human beings ; but we are scarcely in a position to guess the sensations of animals having brains that differ so widely from ours both in quality and quantity. The latter have instinct and intelligence, which urge the hunted beast to run, double and feint—as practised in play since infancy ; but the mirror of consciousness is not there, and, so far as can be judged, animals can have no knowledge of the ‘ why ’ and no concept of ‘ death ’ in the event of capture. Above all, hunted animals are in their natural surroundings, and to the end are free to exert their speed and strength. The ‘ kill ’ is a matter of seconds, and even if it were more prolonged, it seems probable that it would not be accompanied by much physical pain. The evidence of men who have been mauled by tigers and lions is to the effect that they experienced little pain at the time. Though I cannot vouch for the story, I have heard tell of one who found the smell of the tiger that had seized him the most unpleasant part of the adventure. When this can be the case with men, it is likely that less highly developed animals in similar circumstances experience *very little* pain. The cries of animals when seized by other beasts,

commonly supposed to be 'cries of pain,' are probably not so much indications of suffering as of a reflex nature, to serve as a danger warning to others of their own kind.

Consider shooting, whether animals or birds. They are killed in a state of freedom, in the plenitude of health and strength. Like all living things, they have to die, and no 'kinder' death can be imagined. Most people would pray rather for such a sudden death as this than with our Prayer-book to be delivered from it. But it may be objected, what of those that creep away wounded to linger and die? It is a question that cannot be dismissed lightly; but here again we must dismiss the assumption that animals' feelings are as our own. Surgeons with experience of work amongst different races of mankind well know that sensibility to pain is less in some than in others, according to the stage of nervous development reached. Veterinary surgeons similarly are aware that the sensibility of animals to pain does not compare with that of human beings. I have seen a tame gazelle with a compound fracture of the femur eat grain while the limb was being pulled into place and set. Horses begin to feed the very moment they are on their feet after castration, one of the most severe and shocking operations known. The suffering caused to horses undergoing this operation has always seemed to me to be more in connection with their being thrown and bound than from the operation itself. An instance has been recorded of a camel whose lower jaw had been carried away by a shot continuing to carry its load all day with no apparent signs of pain. Such experiences as the writer has had lead him to the belief that wounded beasts and birds feel little pain, but their instinct leads them to hide themselves away, after which they either recover or weaken and succumb, or more frequently fall a prey to others.



Let us now consider some ways in which civilised society exploits the brute creation for its own advantage and pleasure. It may, I think, be taken as a premise that in animals the nearest approach to the mental anguish that human beings experience is caused by the thwarting of their natural instincts. A wild bird in confinement, for example. There was a cage near the house where we once lived abroad in which a tiger was wearing out his beast's soul. He had plenty of food and water, but in the hush of the hot weather nights the air vibrated to his call, low at first, but rising to impotent thunder till it died away, and I never heard a more pathetic sound. The instincts impelling him to roam, to hunt, to mate, were all thwarted. In shooting tigers in the jungle a sportsman commits no such wrong as that! Speaking of instincts, I may remark in passing on the confusion of ideas indicated by the popular approval of the confinement of wild animals and birds in cages on the one hand and the condemnation of cock-fighting on the other!

It is my belief that domesticated animals suffer more in the operations of butchery than wild beasts and birds killed by the sportsman. Professor Romanes, remarking on the observed fact that a dog yelps at an injury a fox or wolf would receive in silence, believed that domestication engenders a refinement of the nervous system. I am not qualified to express an opinion about the truth of this conclusion. There can, however, be little doubt that in the slaughtering of animals the worst part of the proceeding is not the actual killing, but the events leading up to it—the duress, the roping, the carting, the marketing, the rail journeys, the rough handling in strange surroundings, and finally the forcible introduction into a reeking abattoir. In human beings there is a mental condition called claustrophobia—a horror of being enclosed. It may be an atavistic legacy from man's ancestors, for many animals



have this overwhelming dread.¹ After all this, the killing is a release. By all means let the 'humane killer' be insisted on, but in comparison it is a bagatelle. The 'kindest' way to slaughter domesticated animals would be to shoot them in the open air, in their own meadows, with no dreadful preliminaries; and even if it were done clumsily, it would still be the 'kindest' way. If a favourite dog has to be destroyed, how should it be done? Not by sending him to a veterinary surgeon to be poisoned or chloroformed, which must ensure the unhappiness of his last moments. By far the best way, dreadful as it is as I know too well, is instantaneous death by a shot from his master's gun. Though one must be cautious about investing animals with our mental clothes, it is the difference between a man being killed by a bullet from the unseen and death by execution with all its mental tortures.

Consider the cruelty connected with the marketing of poultry. Read the instructions for the use of a machine for the forcible stuffing of birds for the table. Think of the average lives of horses and donkeys—those poor slaves—from beginning to end. So much for man's 'friends.' For man's animal enemies, such as the rat, no way is too horrible for their destruction. No, if ever dumb creation stand before the judgment-seat of the Creator as man's accusers, I venture to say that those who will figure most prominently in the indictment will not be the sportsman, nor the hunter.

It is, of course, obvious that as members of society sportsmen share in the general guilt attaching to the treatment of animals. The absurdity lies in an assumption of moral superiority over the latter by carnivorous people who are not sportsmen. To this they can have no possible right. Of what kind, after all, are the people who denounce sport? There

¹ 'The Childhood of Animals,' by Dr Chalmers Mitchell.

are, of course, the few humanitarians, properly so called, who do, so far as may be possible, act on the principles they profess. They are neither eaters of meat, nor do they wear fur or feathers. Their opinions and views, impracticable though they may be, entitle them to respect ; their consistency compels admiration. It may be they are only in advance of their time. Generations hence it is likely there will be no butchers and no sportsmen. Then there are the sentimentalists, persons who, having some vague idea that they are lovers of animals, lend themselves to propaganda of which they do not seem to realise the implications. The facile humanitarianism they profess leads them to no act of self-denial or renunciation, for they do not pause to consider that as eaters of meat and wearers of skins and feathers they are accessories to all the cruelties connected with the trades concerned, which are in most cases worse than those inherent in the sports they denounce. Lastly, there are the typical prohibitionists,¹ cranks of whom the Anglo-Saxon races have more than their share, who would force their own nostrums for the reform of mankind down people's throats by law—people in whose nature it is to

“Compound with sins they are inclined to
By damning those they have no mind to.”

With these the motive seems sometimes to be not so much solicitude for persecuted animals as a

¹ “There still survives” (Lord Hewart said), “that curiously attractive sense of duty which enables a man to perceive, or to think he perceives, with extraordinary clearness the duty of somebody else, a sense of duty closely akin to that imperfect sympathy which impels a person not indeed to give something of his own to the sufferer, but to dip his hand into another person's pocket for the purpose. It appears to be hard to draw a clear distinction between deciding a question of right and wrong for oneself and deciding it for others against their will. Yet it is necessary, in the interests of morality and law alike, to avoid confusion between the province of the one and the province of the other.”

virulent rancour against sportsmen. In a pamphlet I have before me such different sentiments as class jealousy, the commercial spirit and pitifulness are each invoked in turn to support their campaign for the abolition of fox-hunting.¹ Fox-hunting, it is urged, should be prohibited as a sport of the rich at the expense of the poor. But foxes should be exterminated because they kill poultry which men rear for their own advantage. Killing foxes by hunting is, however, cruel and barbarous, while cub-hunting is 'a massacre of *innocents*'! Disingenuousness could hardly go further. May the fox long be spared from his 'humanitarian' friends. It is this type of person who one day may be heard talking earnestly about the brutality of sport and the next is seen in front of a poulterer's shop selecting a brace of pheasants for his table :—

"With sobs and sighs he sorted out those of the largest size, Holding his pocket-handkerchief before his streaming eyes."

I am, of course, aware that many people who do not belong to the sect of Pharisee think that while butchery is right, sport is wrong—Dean Inge, for instance.² In his defence of killing for food he seems to have adopted the attitude of pragmatism—the belief is true which works. Eating meat is a necessity—a 'universal law of Nature.' This clearly has no connection with what 'ought to be.' It has, moreover, been proved that eating meat is neither necessary, so far as human beings are concerned, nor 'a law of Nature.' For heaven's sake

¹ 'Foxes, Fowls and Farmers,' published by the Society for the Abolition of Cruel Sports. Since this society holds that all sports are cruel (and rightly according to the standard of 'what ought to be'), it would be more honest if they termed themselves 'The Society for the Abolition of Sport.' There already exists the S.P.C.A., an excellent movement whose province it is to prevent the infliction of wanton *pain* on dumb creatures.

² 'Lay Thoughts of a Dean.'



let us be honest. People eat meat at the bidding of their appetites, because they like it, not because they have nothing else to eat or *can* eat nothing else. As a guide to pure morality on this question I prefer King Asoka of B.C. 260 to the Dean of St Paul's of 1932 A.D. Asoka said: "Flesh meat cannot be procured without injury to animals, and the slaughter of animals is not conducive to heavenly bliss. From flesh meat, therefore, let man abstain." About sport Dean Inge writes: "To make a pleasure of killing harmless beasts and birds is a barbarous thing, now that we know what science has taught us about our kinship with them." Rather an incautious sentence this! Suppose for the word 'killing' we substitute 'eating'! Sportsmen, however, may no more feel disposed to quarrel with the Dean of St Paul's than were, I suppose, the children of Israel with Balaam, for he is the author of that very apposite epigram, 'Nobody is so much interested in the demand for pork as the pig'!

In the campaign that is being conducted against sportsmen by the society already alluded to, prejudice is so far allowed to pervert honesty as to lead their writers to seize on isolated acts of brutality committed in the course of field sports and to hold them up to impressionable and ignorant people as typical of sport itself. Yet it should be obvious that crimes of this sort are no more in the nature of sport than the crimes which have been committed in the name of liberty are in the nature of liberty.

It is a little remarkable that though the anti-sports fanatic does not suggest the abolition of butchers, yet when he desires to label sportsmen as offensively as possible he selects the word 'butcher.' Now butchers as a class are no worse people than other citizens; but there is a very real difference between butchers and sportsmen, which, with apologies to most of my readers, perhaps I may be allowed to say something about. Long ago there were

DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN POLITICAL

hunters but no butchers. It was when man found by experiment that it was possible to domesticate and cause to breed in captivity certain of the wild animals that tasted good that butchers came on the scene. But the hunting instinct survived, and hunters continued to exist. In those days, and indeed till recently, the hunter's weapons were crude, and he killed his quarry as best he could. Now, in consequence of the improvement in weapons and with a view to preserving the condition of difficulty that gives pursuit zest, sportsmen have been drawn to limit themselves in respect of methods, the object always being to give their quarry a 'sporting chance.' In butchery the animal or bird is given no chance at all, and in its pitiless, inexorable nature it is the antithesis of sport. The more the elements of hazard, toil and skill enter into a sport, and the greater the chance of the quarry's escape, the higher rank does that sport take; while killing in which these factors do not appear, whatever else it may be, is not sport. A few instances will suffice to illustrate these very elementary principles. Some ignorant people seem to imagine that in pheasant shooting tame birds are made to rise near the guns and are then easily slaughtered. The fact is that it is the ambition of every owner of covert shooting to have the birds sent over the guns from as far and as high and as fast as possible—in this respect there is nothing to choose between wild and reared birds—thus making their shooting difficult. So pheasant shooting is properly considered 'sport,' though, in the opinion of some, not so high a form of sport as when the elements of toil and hazard are also present. It may, indeed, be regretted that there has been a tendency (perhaps inevitable) for shooting in this country to become increasingly a matter for skill in marksmanship rather to the overshadowing of its hunting aspect. It is held to be 'unsportsmanlike' to shoot into the 'brown' of birds, to kill several at



a shot, and to take long shots at big game at the risk of maiming instead of killing. There are many deadly ways of killing fish known to sportsmen, but never used by them. In the East some airmen chased gazelles and killed them from their machines. As soon as the possibilities of this form of shooting were realised it was condemned and is no longer practised. Such instances could be multiplied indefinitely. It is not without reason that the word 'sportsmanlike' has acquired its well-known meaning.¹

I read lately a vehemently worded argument against game preservation and in favour of the protection of jays, stoats and other 'interesting' vermin. But apart from utilitarian considerations, it is certainly not more moral—in fact it is less moral—to allow nature, 'red in tooth and claw,' to pursue her ruthless way than for man to use his discretion in guiding the process. It may be more 'interesting' to see a rabbit caught by a stoat than to see him shot, to see a hedgehog dining off a clutch of partridge's eggs than to see the grown birds killed by guns, but those who profess these tastes must really not claim for themselves superior virtue. The fact is that in civilised countries man is so committed to the management of the affairs of covert, field and stream that he cannot withdraw. The task of preserving a balance has mainly devolved on the game preserver, and he has not done it badly. Even the protection afforded by law in England to

¹ It is the writer's personal opinion that betting about the chances of killing birds and animals, leaving quite out of consideration the possibility of its leading to malpractices, is antagonistic to the true spirit of venery. And in the same way there seems to be something incongruous and wrong about sports, meaning 'blood-sports' (to use an ugly expression), being made into a public spectacle. It is perhaps due to the existence of this sentiment that public coursing and pigeon shooting from traps meet with condemnation by people who do not disapprove of other sports, although, as I have endeavoured to show, coursing hares with greyhounds is not intrinsically more cruel than other methods of killing.

wild birds which are neither game nor vermin has been largely due to the initiative of these very people. The game preserver has no wish to see rare and beautiful birds or animals, even of a predatory kind, exterminated, though he would desire to have their numbers kept within bounds.

The problem of preserving indigenous fauna is of a much more urgent kind in the wilder parts of the world where their numbers are being rapidly diminished by advancing civilisation. *Homo sapiens* has obtained his supremacy by the law of the jungle. In his ascent he has used many species of less intelligent animals, including doubtless some of his own kind, as steps in his ladder. Now, at last, civilised races have the power consciously and intelligently to shape their own evolution, if they care to do so, and incidentally they have become the mandatory powers, not only for the backward races of mankind, but for all the humbler living creatures of the earth. Towards these, civilised man has a duty that forbids either their extermination or their selfish and cruel exploitation. Ethical considerations would at any rate point to the existence of such a duty. The subject cannot be followed here; but it is at least pertinent to remember that it was mainly due to the sportsmen of this country that the extermination of game animals over vast areas in Africa (at one time seriously contemplated in the shadowy hope of circumscribing the fly area) was postponed and, it may be hoped, prevented.

A remark sometimes heard is that field sports are 'brutalising'—i.e., that hunting and shooting have a degrading effect on the character. The *a priori* reasoning that leads to this conclusion is simple. Killing is brutal, and those who habitually kill must in time become brutalised. If, however, people who hold such ideas will think honestly about their acquaintances who are sportsmen, they will realise that they are not more brutal than



others. They are not as a class worse fathers and mothers,¹ less considerate, less generous, nor even less humane to the dumb animals about them. The reason why this is so may perhaps be connected with the idea of 'service.' Hunting was originally a family service carried out by the stronger to procure meat and clothing for the weaker, or for their protection. Although circumstances have so changed that hunting is no longer necessary economically—in this country at least—the old idea survives. It is an essential part of modern sport, artificial as it often is, that the killing should be in some way a service. The quarry must be either good for food or else noxious. This explains why sportsmen do not kill harmless animals and birds that cannot be utilised—the sin of the Ancient Mariner—and why leaving dead creatures on the ground is an abomination. With some diffidence I may suggest that this essential idea of service affords some explanation why the cult of big game photography does not appeal very much to the majority of sportsmen. The hunter's craft required is as great, the skill of a more complicated kind, the toil and risk not less, but the result is—a photograph. It seems necessary in sport that there should be something to bring back in the bag, even if it is only—

"a little rabbit skin
To wrap the baby bunting in."

I once read an account in the 'Field' about the stalking of an Indian black buck. After some vicissitudes the writer succeeded in getting close to the buck unseen, and then, instead of shooting him, he rose

¹ There is no *logical* reason why women should not shoot and hunt as well as men. Some time ago, of course, in Western Europe, men did place women on a pedestal of virtues deemed to be exclusively feminine. From this pedestal the daughters of Eve have of their own accord slowly and steadily—and, it may be added, not ungracefully—descended. The old-fashioned may regret it, but there the matter ends.

DIVERSIONS OF AN INDIAN POLITICAL

to his feet, took off his hat in salutation and let him go. It was a generous act and one that will certainly give the sportsman pleasure to look back on, but it was its exceptional nature that gave it point. One could not go on stalking and taking off one's hat to bucks! For my own part, though—like all sportsmen—I have spared more beasts, for reasons of sex, immaturity, rarity and so on than I have shot, I have never refused to take a shot at a good head because it was too easy! Such chances are merely offsets against failures and a subject for gratitude.

Yet it would be wrong to suppose that no shadow of regret at the death of beast or bird ever passes over a sportsman. Far from it. Even those who, like the Arabs, deem every day wasted that is not spent in sport are sensible of such feelings.

Sometimes as evening draws on, before the lights are lit, I look round at the heads that are regarding me from the wall—impassive, pathetic, austere faces. I fancy myself speaking to them after the manner of the Indian to his slain bear, craving forgiveness. "Tiger," I say, "forgive me—you and all savage beasts that I have injured. You were incomparably beautiful and strong. But you were killers of weaker beasts, and your killing was not always for meat; sometimes you killed for sport. If you had lived on, you would have perished in a worse way—old and toothless. Sooner or later your time had to come. It was your fate to die thus. Bear me no grudge. Peace be with you.

"And you too, poor horned beasts—dwellers in jungles, plains and mountains—forgive me. How was it your keen senses of eyes and nose did not warn you of the danger? Consider, also, you were full of years. Some of you had already been expelled from the herd by the young and strong. Solitary, you would have been killed and eaten by other beasts. In either case, one day the end comes, and when it comes it is sad. Remember, you too were



not always gentle. You had your fights with your own kind, and you showed no mercy. Have I not seen one of you hurl an adversary from a crag, spinning downwards into a gulf of air? For this, too, I do not blame *you*; it is your nature. You know how your meat fed many humble folk who were grateful. For destroying and being destroyed is in the essence of things, and from it we cannot escape. You do not understand it; I also do not understand it. Bear me no grudge. Peace be with you."

I wait and listen in the growing gloom and think. How good to hear the reply: "And with you, peace!" But there is no answer; only the sad whisper of the wind in the pine-trees.

1502